

Barbara Hare's
Revelation

1889

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BARBARA HARE'S REVELAT

"Some visitors in the drawing-room, my lady Justice Hare and Mrs. Hare, and Miss Barbara."

Isabel descended, her mind full of the Susan. The justice was in a new flaxen pompadour; Mrs. Hare pale, delicate, and in such was the impression they made upon

They paid rather a long visit. Isabel gentle and suffering Mrs. Hare, who had Carlyle engaged. Miss Carlyle wished to something, he said, to show Barbara. That a brother-justice coming to dine with him past four: Barbara might stay if she liked.

Barbara's face crimsoned: nevertheless proffered her by Miss Carlyle, to remain at the day.

Dinner-time approached, and Isabel went up to was waiting, and entered upon the subject of the suit.

"My lady, I have spoken to Miss Carlyle, and she is should be transferred to you, but she says I ought first acquaint you with certain unpleasant facts in my history, and same thought had occurred to me. Miss Carlyle is not over-pleasant in manner, my lady, but she is very upright and just."

"What facts?" asked Lady Isabel, sitting down to have her hair brushed.

"My lady, I'll tell you as shortly as I can. My father was a clerk in Mr. Carlyle's office—of course I mean the late Mr. Carlyle. My mother died when I was eight years old, and my father afterwards married again, a sister of Mr. Kane's wife—"

"Mr. Kane, the music-master?"

"Yes, my lady. She was a governess; she and Mrs. Kane had both been governesses, they were quite ladies, so far as education and manners went, and West Lynne said that in stooping to marry my father she lowered herself dreadfully. But he was a very handsome man, and a clever man also, though self-taught. Well, they married, and at the end of a year Afy was born—"

"Who?" interrupted Lady Isabel.

"My half-sister, Afy. In another year her mother died, and an aunt of her mother sent for the child, and said she should bring her up. I remained at home with my father."

"I grew up, I went to learn in the prettiest cottage, my lady own. After I was out of school, I went to other houses to work, seeing to the woman who did the housework all day. That went on for a year or two, until my father had died, and her mother died. Then the aunt who had brought up Afy well, she could leave her, and her notions were fine, and she was very pretty, and would go about and she used to get at the West Lynne: we were only plain, working-class people."

EAST LYNNE.

a lady—the effect of bringing her up above her
size had she and I together, chiefly about her
not acquainted with young Richard Hare."

ckly.

son ; own brother to Miss Barbara," pro-
voice, as though Barbara might hear her
, she was very flighty ; she encouraged
grew to love her with quite a bad sort of
and Afy used to laugh at him behind his
thers too, and would have them there in an
was free. My father was secretary to the
ad to be there two evenings in the week,
arlyle's; he was fond of shooting, too, and,
go out with his gun ; and as I scarcely ever
o'clock, Afy was often alone, and she took the
g one or other of her admirers there."

"Many admirers?" asked Lady Isabel, who seemed in-
terested in the tale jokingly.

"The chief one, my lady, was Richard Hare. She got acquainted
with somebody else, a stranger, who used to ride over from a distance
to see her ; but I fancy there was nothing in it ; Mr. Richard was the
one. And it went on and on, till—till—he killed her father."

"Who?" uttered the startled Lady Isabel.

"Richard Hare, my lady. My father had told Afy that Mr. Richard
should not come there any longer, for when gentlemen go in secret
after poor girls, it is well known they have not marriage in their
thoughts : my father would have interfered more than he did, but
that he judged well of Mr. Richard, and did not think he was one to
do Afy harm—but he did not know how flighty she was. How-
ever, one day he heard people talking about it in West Lynne, coupling
her name and Mr. Richard's offensively together, and at night he told
Afy, before me, that it should not go on any longer, and she must not
encourage him. My lady, the next night Richard Hare shot my
father."

"How very dreadful!"

"Whether it was done on purpose, or whether the gun went off in a
cuffie, I can't tell : people think it was wilful murder. I never shall
forget the scene, my lady, when I got home that night : it was at
Mr. Hare's that I had been working. My father was lying on the
dead ; and the house was full of people. Afy could give no
details : she had gone out to the wood path at the back, and
I heard or saw anything amiss ; but when she went in again,
she lay father. Mr. Locksley was leaning over him ; he told Afy
I heard the shot, and came up in time to see Richard Hare
away, and fly from the house with his shoes stained with

I like to hear this. What was done to Richard

Hare? He went off that same night, and has never
been seen since. There's a judgment of murder out against him.
It would be the first to deliver him up to justice. It is

a dreadful thing to have befallen the Hare family, who are high and respectable people ; it is killing Mrs. Hare by inches. Afy—”

“What is it, that name, Joyce?”

“My lady, she was christened by a very fine name—Aphrodite : so I and my father never called her anything but Afy. But I have the worst to tell you yet, my lady—the worst as regards her. As soon as the inquest was over, she went off, after Richard Hare.”

Lady Isabel uttered an exclamation.

“She did indeed, my lady,” returned Joyce, turning away her wet eyelashes and her flushed cheeks from the gaze of her mistress. “Nothing has been heard of either of them : and it is hardly likely but what they went out of England—perhaps to Australia ; perhaps to America ; nobody knows. What with the shame of that, and the shock of my poor father’s murder, I had an attack of illness. It was a nervous fever, and it lasted long : Miss Carlyle had me at her house, and she and her servants nursed me through it. She’s good at heart, my lady, is Miss Carlyle, only her manners are against her, and she thinks herself better than other people. After that illness, I stayed betwixt as upper maid, and never went out to work again.”

“How long is it since this happened ?”

“It will be four years next September, my lady. The cottage has stood empty ever since, for nobody will live in it ; they say it is tainted with murder. And I can’t sell it, because Afy has a right in it as well as I. I go to it sometimes, and open the windows, and air it. And this was what I had to tell you, my lady, before you decide to take me into your service. It is not every lady would like to engage one whose sister has turned out so badly.”

Lady Isabel did not see that it ought to make any difference. She said so : and then leaned back in her chair, and mused.

“Which dress, my lady ?”

“Joyce, what was that I heard you and Susan gossiping about at the door ?” Lady Isabel suddenly asked. “About Miss Hare giving me a bowl of poison. You should tell Susan not to whisper so loudly.”

Joyce smiled, though she was rather confused. “It was only a bit of nonsense, of course, my lady. The fact is, that people think Miss Barbara was much attached to Mr. Carlyle, regularly in love with him, and many thought it would be a match. But I don’t fancy she would have been the one to make him happy, with all her love.”

A hot flush passed over the brow of Lady Isabel ; a sensation very like jealousy flew to her heart. No woman likes to hear that another woman either is or has been attached to her husband : a doubt always arises whether the feeling may not have been reciprocated.

Lady Isabel descended. She wore a costly black lace dress, its low body and sleeves trimmed with white lace as costly, and ornaments of jet. She looked inexpressibly beautiful, and Barbara turned from her with a feeling of sickening jealousy ; from her beauty, from her arm even from the fine, soft handkerchief, which dispelled the heat and rank—the coronet of an earl’s daughter. Barbara looked up and whs in a light-blue silk robe, and her pretty cheeks were flushed with her mind’s excitement. On her neck she wore the chain of the passion necklace given her by Mr. Carlyle—she had not discarded that.

They stood together at the window, looking at Mr. Carlyle as he came up the avenue. He saw them, and nodded. Lady Isabel watched the damask cheeks turn to crimson at sight of him.

"How do you do, Barbara?" he cried, as he shook hands. "Come to pay us a visit at last? you have been tardy over it. And how are you, my darling?" he whispered, bending over his wife: but she missed his kiss of greeting. Well! would she have had him give it her in public? No; but she was in the mood to notice the omission.

Dinner over, Miss Carlyle beguiled Barbara out of doors. To exhibit the beauties of the East Lynne pleasure grounds, the rarities of the conservatory, thinks the reader. Not at all: she was anxious to show off the stock of vegetables, the asparagus and cucumber beds; worth a hundred acres of flowers in Miss Carlyle's estimation. Barbara went unwillingly: she would rather be in his presence than away from it; and she could not help feeling this, although he was the husband of another. Isabel remained indoors: Barbara was Miss Carlyle's guest.

"Do you like her?" abruptly asked Barbara, alluding to Lady Isabel.

"Better than I thought I should," acknowledged Miss Carlyle. "I had expected airs and graces and pretence, and I must say she is free from them. She seems quite wrapped up in Archibald, and watches for his coming home as a cat watches for a mouse. She is dull without him."

Barbara plucked a rose as they passed a bush, and began pulling it to pieces, leaf by leaf. "Dull! how does she employ her time?"

"In doing nothing," snappishly retorted Miss Carlyle. "Sings a bit, and plays a bit, and reads a bit, and receives her visitors, and idles away her days in that manner. She coaxes Archibald out here after breakfast, and he ought not to let himself be coax'd; it makes him late at his office; and then she dances down to the park gates with him, hindering him still farther, for he would go alone in half the time. One morning it poured with rain: she actually went all the same. I told her she would spoil her dress: oh, that was nothing, she said, and Archibald wrapped a shawl round her and took her. Of course to spoil dresses is nothing to her! And in an evening she goes down to meet him again; she would have gone to-day, if you had not been here. Oh, she is first with him now: business is second."

Barbara compelled her manner to indifference. "I suppose it is natural."

"I suppose it is absurd," was the retort of Miss Carlyle. "I give them very little of my company, especially of an evening. They go strolling out together, or she sings to him, he hanging over her as if she were gold; to judge by appearances, she is more precious to him than any gold that ever was coined into money. I'll tell you what I heard night. They had post-horses to the close carriage yesterday, and many visits, never reaching home till past seven, and always waiting. Archibald had what he is not often liable to, headache, and he went into the next room after the sofa. She carried a cup of tea to him, and never set her own on the table till it was perfectly cold. I

pushed open the door to tell her so. There was my lady's cambric handkerchief, soaked in eau-de-Cologne, lying on his forehead ; and there was my lady herself, kneeling down and looking at him, he with his arm thrown round her to hold her there. Now I just ask you, Barbara, whether there's any sense in fadding with a man like that ? If ever he had a headache before he was married, I used to mix him up a good dose of salts and senna, and tell him to go to bed early and sleep the pain off."

Barbara made no reply : but she turned her face from Miss Carlyle.

They came upon the gardener, and Miss Carlyle entered into a discussion with him, a somewhat warm one ; she insisted upon having certain work done in a certain way ; he asserting that Mr. Carlyle had ordered it done another. Barbara grew tired, and returned to the house.

Isabel and her husband were in the adjoining room, at the piano, and Barbara had an opportunity of hearing that sweet voice. She did as Miss Carlyle confessed to have done, pushed open the door between the two rooms, and looked in. It was the twilight hour, almost too dusk to see ; but she could distinguish Isabel seated at the piano, and Mr. Carlyle standing behind her. She was singing one of the ballads from the opera of the " Bohemian Girl :" " When other lips."

" Why do you like the song so much, Archibald ? " she asked when she had finished it.

" I don't know. I never liked it ~~so~~ much until I heard it from you."

" I wonder if they have come in. Shall we go into the next room ? "

" Just this one first, this translation from the German. ' Twere vain to tell thee all I feel.' There's real music in that song."

" Yes, there is. Do you know, Archibald, your taste is just like papa's. He liked all these quiet, imaginative songs, and so do you. And so do I," she laughingly added, " if I must speak the truth. Mrs. Vane used to stop her ears and make a face, when papa made me sing them. Papa returned the compliment ; for he would walk out of the room if she began her loud Italian airs. I speak of the time when she was with us in London."

She ceased, and began the song, singing it exquisitely, in a low, sweet, earnest tone, the chords of the accompaniment, at its conclusion, dying off gradually into silence.

" There, Archibald ! I am sure I have sung you ten songs at least," she said, leaning her head back against him, and looking at him from her upturned face. " You ought to pay me for them."

He did pay her ; holding the dear face to him, and taking from it impassioned kisses. Barbara turned to the window, a low moan escaping her, as she pressed her forehead on one of its panes, and looked forth into the dusky night. Isabel came in on her husband's arm.

" Are you here alone, Miss Hare ? I really ~~had~~ ^{had} ~~part~~ ^{part} that the supposed you were with Miss Carlyle ? "

" Where is Cornelia, Barbara ? "

" I have only just come in," was Barbara's reply, ~~and~~ ^{as we} and the sobs following me."

So she was; for she came upon them as they were speaking; her voice raised in anger.

"Archibald, what have you been telling Blair about that geranium bed? He says you have been ordering him to make it oval. We decided that it should be square."

"Isabel would prefer it oval," was his reply.

"But it will be best square," repeated Miss Carlyle.

"It is all right, Cornelia; Blair has his orders. I wish it to be oval."

"He is a regular muzz, is that Blair, and as obstinate as a mule," cried Miss Carlyle.

"Indeed, Cornelia, I think him a very good servant."

"Oh, of course," snapped Miss Carlyle. "You never can see faults in any one. You always were a simpleton in some things, Archibald."

Mr. Carlyle laughed good-humouredly; he was of an even, calm temper: and he had, all his life, been subjected to the left-handed compliments of his sister. Isabel resented these speeches in her heart; she was growing more attached to her husband day by day.

"It is well everyone does not think so," cried he, with a glance at his wife and Barbara, as they drew round the tea-table.

The evening went on to ten o'clock, and as the time-piece struck the hour, Barbara rose from her chair in amazement. "I did not think it was so late. Surely some one must have come for me."

"I will inquire," was Lady Isabel's answer; and Mr. Carlyle rang the bell. No one had come for Miss Hare.

"Then I fear I must trouble Peter," cried Barbara. "Mamma may be gone to rest, tired, and papa must have forgotten me. It would never do for me to be locked out," she gaily added.

"As you were one night before," said Mr. Carlyle, significantly.

He alluded to the night when Barbara was in the grove of trees with her unfortunate brother, and Mr. Hare was on the point, unconsciously, of locking her out. She had given Mr. Carlyle the history; but its recollection now called up a sharp pain, and a change passed over her face.

"Oh, don't, Archibald!" she uttered, in the impulse of the moment; "don't recall it." Isabel wondered.

"Can Peter take me?" continued Barbara.

"I had better take you," said Mr. Carlyle. "It is late."

Barbara's heart beat at the words; it beat as she put her things on; as she said good night to Lady Isabel and Miss Carlyle; it beat to throbbing, as she went out with him and took his arm. All just as it used to be—only that he was now the husband of another. Only!

It was a warm, lovely June night, not moonlight, but bright with the summer twilight. They went down the park into the road, which they crossed, and soon came to a stile. From that stile led a path through the fields which would pass the back of Justice Hare's farm. Barbara stopped.

"Would you choose the field way to-night, Barbara? The grass is damp. And this is the longest way."

"I shall escape the dust of the road."

"Well, if you prefer it. It will not make three minutes."

"He is very anxious to get home to *her!*" mentally exclaimed Barbara. "I shall fly out upon him presently, or my heart will burst."

Mr. Carlyle crossed the style, helped over Barbara, and then gave her his arm again. He had taken her parasol ; he had taken it the last night they had walked together ; an elegant little parasol, this of blue silk and white lace, and he did not switch the hedges with it. That night was present to Barbara now, with all its words and its devious hopes ; terribly present to her was their bitter ending.

There are moments in a woman's life when she is betrayed into forgetting the ordinary rules of conduct and propriety ; when she is betrayed into making a scene. It may not often occur ; perhaps never to a cold, secretive nature, where impulse, feeling, and above all, temper, are under strict control. Barbara Hare's temper was not under strict control. Her love, her jealousy, the never-dying pain always preying on her heart-strings since the marriage took place, her keen sense of the humiliation which had come home to her, were all rising fiercely, bubbling up with fiery heat. The evening she had just passed in their company, their evident happiness, the endearments she had seen him lavish upon his wife, were working her up to that state of nervous excitement when temper, tongue, and imagination fly off at a mad tangent. She felt as one isolated for ever, shut out from all that could make life dear ; *they* were the world, she was out of it : what was her existence to him ? A little self-control and Barbara would not have uttered words that must remain on her mind hereafter as an incubus, dyeing her cheeks red whenever she recalled them. It must be remembered too (if anything in the shape of excuse can be admitted) that she was upon terms of close intimacy with Mr. Carlyle. Independently of her own sentiments for him, they had been reared in freedom one with the other, almost as brother and sister. Mr. Carlyle walked on, utterly unconscious of the storm that was raging within her ; more than that, he was unconscious of having given cause for one ; and he dashed into topics, indifferent and commonplace, in the most provoking manner.

"When does the justice begin haymaking, Barbara ?"

There was no reply ; Barbara was trying to keep down her emotion. Mr. Carlyle tried again :

"Barbara, I asked you which day your papa cuts his hay !"

Still no reply. Barbara was literally incapable of making one. Her throat was working, the muscles of her mouth began to twitch, and a convulsive sob, or what sounded like it, broke from her. Mr. Carlyle turned his head hastily.

"Barbara ! are you ill ? What is it ?"

On it came, passion, temper, wrongs, and nervousness, all boiling over together. She was in strong hysterics. Mr. Carlyle half carried, half dragged her to the second stile, and placed her against it, his arm supporting her ; and an old cow and two calves, wondering what the disturbance could mean at that sober time of night, walked up and stared at them.

Barbara struggled with her emotion, struggled bravely, and the sobs and hysterical symptoms subsided ; not the excitement of the passion,

She put away his arm, and stood with her back to the stile, leaning against it. Mr. Carlyle felt inclined to fly to the pond for water, only he had nothing but his hat to bring it in.

"Are you better, Barbara? What can have caused all this?"

"What can have caused it!" she burst forth in passionate uncontrol. "You can ask me that?"

Mr. Carlyle was dumbfounded: but, by some inexplicable law of sympathy, a dim and very unpleasant consciousness of the truth began to steal over him.

"I don't understand you, Barbara. If I have offended you in any way, I am truly sorry."

"Truly sorry, no doubt! What do you care for me? If I go under the sod to-morrow," stamping it with her foot, "you have your wife to care for: what am I?"

"Hush!" he interposed, glancing round, more mindful for her than she was for herself.

"Hush, yes! what is my misery to you? I would rather be in my grave, Archibald Carlyle, than endure the life I lead. My pain is greater than I know how to bear."

"I cannot affect to misunderstand you," he said, feeling extremely annoyed and vexed. "But, my dear Barbara, I never gave you cause to think that I—that I—cared for you more than I did care."

"Never gave me cause!" she gasped. "When you have been coming to our house constantly, almost as my shadow; when you gave me this"—dashing open her mantle, and holding up the locket to his view; "when you have been more intimate with me than a brother!"

"Stay, Barbara. There it is—a brother. I have been nothing else: it never occurred to me to be anything else," he added, in his straightforward truth.

"Ay, as a brother, nothing else!" and her voice rose once more with her excitement; it seemed that she would not long control it. "What cared you for my feelings? what recked you that you gained my love?"

"Barbara, hush!" he implored; "do be calm and reasonable. If I ever gave you cause to think I regarded you with deeper feeling, I can only express to you my deep regret, and assure you it was done unconsciously."

She was growing calmer. The passion was fading, leaving her face still and white. She lifted it towards Mr. Carlyle.

"If she had not come between us, should you have loved me?"

"I don't know. How can I know? Do I not say to you, Barbara, that I only thought of you as a friend, as a 'sister'? I cannot tell what might have been."

"I could bear it better, but that it was known," she murmured. "All West Lynne had coupled us together in their prying gossip, and they have only pity to cast to me now. I would far rather you had killed me, Archibald."

"I can only express to you my deep regret," he repeated. "I can only hope you will soon forget it all. Let the remembrance of this conversation pass away with to-night; let us still be to each other as

friends—as brother and sister. Believe me," he concluded, in a deeper tone, "the confession has not lessened you in my estimation."

He made a movement as though he would get over the stile, but Barbara did not stir: the tears were silently coursing down her pallid face. At that moment there was an interruption.

"Is that you, Miss Barbara?"

Barbara started as though she had been shot. On the other side of the stile stood Wilson, their upper maid. How long might she have been there! She began to explain that Mr. Hare had sent Jasper out, and Mrs. Hare had thought it better to wait no longer for the man's return, so had despatched her, Wilson, for Miss Barbara. Mr. Carlyle crossed the stile, and handed over Barbara.

"You need not come any further now," she said to him, in a low tone.

"I shall see you home," was his reply: and he held out his arm. Barbara took it.

They walked on in silence. Arrived at the back gate of the Grove, which gave entrance to the kitchen-garden, Wilson went forward. Mr. Carlyle took both Barbara's hands in his.

"Good night, Barbara. God bless you."

She had had time for reflection: and the excitement gone, she saw her outbreak in all its shame and folly. Mr. Carlyle noticed how subdued and white she looked.

"I think I have been mad," she groaned. "I must have been mad to say what I did. Forget that it was uttered."

"I told you I would do so."

"You will not betray me to—to—your wife?" she panted.

"Barbara!"

"Thank you. Good night."

But he still retained her hands. "In a short time, Barbara, I trust you will find one more worthy to receive your love than I have been."

"Never," she impulsively answered. "I do not love and forget so lightly. In the years to come, in my old age, I shall still be nothing but Barbara Hare."

Mr. Carlyle walked away in a fit of musing. The revelation had given him pain (and possibly a little flattery), for he was fond of pretty Barbara. Fond in his way; not in hers; not with the sort of fondness he felt for his wife. He asked his conscience whether his manner to her in past days had been a tinge warmer than we bestow upon a sister, and he decided that it might have been, but that he most certainly had never cast a suspicion to the mischief it was doing.

"I heartily hope she will soon find some one to her liking, and forget me," was his concluding thought. "As to living and dying Barbara Hare, that is all moonshine; the sentimental rubbish that girls like to—"

"Archibald!"

He was passing the very last tree in the park, the nearest to his house, and the interruption came from a dark form standing under it.

"Is it you, my dearest?"

"I came out to meet you. Have you not been very long?"

"I think I have," he answered, as he drew his wife to his side, and

walked on with her. "We met one of the servants at the second stile, but I went all the way."

"You have been intimate with the Hares?"

"Quite so. Cornelia is related to them."

"Do you think Barbara pretty?"

"Very."

"Then—intimate as you were—I wonder you never fell in love with her."

Mr. Carlyle laughed; a very conscious laugh, considering the recent interview.

"Did you, Archibald?"

The words were spoken in a low tone, almost, or he fancied it, a tone of emotion, and he looked at her in amazement. "Did I what, Isabel?"

"You never loved Barbara Hare?"

"Loved *her*! What is your head running on, Isabel? I never loved but one woman: and that one I made my wife."

CHAPTER XVII.

DEATH OR LIFE.

ANOTHER year came in. Isabel would have been altogether happy but for Miss Carlyle: that lady still inflicted her presence upon East Lynne, and was the bane of its househould. She deferred outwardly to Lady Isabel as mistress; but the real mistress was herself, Isabel little more than an automaton. Her impulses were checked, her wishes frustrated, her actions tacitly condemned by the imperiously willed Miss Carlyle. Poor Isabel, with her refined manners and her timid and sensitive temperament, stood no chance against the strong-minded woman, and she was in a state of galling subjection in her own house. Mr. Carlyle suspected it not. At home only morning and evening, and then generally alone with his wife, and becoming gradually more absorbed with the cares of his business, which increased upon him, he saw not that anything was wrong. Once, certain counter-orders of the two ladies had clashed with each other, and caused a commotion: Miss Carlyle immediately withdrew hers, but, in doing so, her peculiarly ungracious manner was more ungracious than ever. Isabel had then hinted to her husband that they might be happier if they lived alone; hinted it with a changing cheek and beating heart, as if she were committing a wrong upon Miss Carlyle. He proposed to his sister that she should return to her own home; she turned round and accused him of speaking for Isabel. In his truthful open way, he acknowledged the fact, making no secret of it. Miss Carlyle bounced off and presented herself before Lady Isabel, demanding what offence she had committed, and why the house was not large enough for her to have a corner in it. Isabel, shrinkingly tenacious of hurting the feelings even of an enemy, absolutely made a sort of apology, and afterwards begged her husband to think no more of what she had said. He did not; he was easy and unsuspicuous; but had he only gained the faintest

inkling of the truth, he would not have lost a moment in emancipating his wife from the thraldom of Miss Corny.

Not a day passed but Miss Carlyle, by dint of hints and inuendoes, contrived to impress upon Lady Isabel the unfortunate blow to his own interests that Mr. Carlyle's marriage had been, the ruinous expense she had entailed upon the family. It struck a complete chill to Isabel's heart, and she became painfully imbued with the incubus she must be to Mr. Carlyle—so far as his purse was concerned. Lord Mount Severn, with his little son, had paid them a short visit at Christmas, and Isabel had asked him, apparently with unconcern, whether Mr. Carlyle had put himself very much out of the way to marry her; whether it had entailed on him an expense and a style of living he would not otherwise have deemed himself justified in affording. Lord Mount Scvern's reply was an unfortunate one. He said his opinion was that it had, and that Isabel ought to feel grateful to him for his generosity. She sighed as she listened, and from thenceforth determined to *put up* with Miss Carlyle. That lady contributed a liberal share to the maintenance of the household, and *would do it*; quite as much as would have kept up her establishment at home. She was not at East Lynne to save her own pocket, and there lay a greater difficulty in getting rid of her. Whether she spent her money at East Lynne or not, it would come to the same in the end, for it was known that all she had would go to Archibald.

More timid and sensitive by nature than many would believe or can imagine, reared in seclusion more simply and quietly than falls to the general lot of peers' daughters, completely inexperienced, Isabel was unfit to battle with the world, totally unfit to battle with Miss Carlyle. The penniless state in which she was left at her father's death: the want of a home, except that accorded her at Castle Marling, even the hundred-pound note left in her hand by Mr. Carlyle, all had imbued her with a deep consciousness of humiliation; and, far from rebelling at or despising the small establishment (comparatively speaking) provided for her by Mr. Carlyle, she felt thankful to him for it. But to be told continually that this was more than he could afford, that she was in fact a blight upon his prospects, was enough to turn her heart to bitterness. Oh, that she had had the courage to speak openly to her husband! that he might, by a single word of earnest love and assurance, have taken the weight from her heart, and rejoiced it with the truth—that all these miserable complaints were but the phantoms of his narrow-minded sister. But Isabel never did so; when Miss Corny lapsed into her grumbling mood, she would hear in silence, or gently bend her aching forehead in her hands, never retorting.

One day—it was in the month of February—after a tolerably long explosion of wrath on Miss Corny's part, not directed against Isabel, but at something which had gone wrong amongst the servants, silence supervened. Isabel, who was sitting listless and dispirited, suddenly broke it, speaking more to herself than to Miss Carlyle.

"I wish evening had come!"

"Why do you wish that?"

"Because Archibald would be at home."

Miss Carlyle gave an unsatisfactory grunt. "You seem tired, Lady Isabel."

"I am very tired."

"I don't wonder at it. I should be tired to death if I sat doing nothing all day. Indeed, I think I should soon drop into my grave."

"There's nothing to do," returned Lady Isabel.

"There's always something to do when people like to look for it. You might help me with these new table napkins, rather than do nothing."

"I make table napkins!" exclaimed Lady Isabel.

"You might do a worse thing, ma'am," snapped Miss Corny.

"I don't understand that sort of work," said Isabel, gently.

"Neither does anyone else till they try. For my part, I'd rather set on and make and mend shoes, than I'd sit with my hands before me. It's a sinful waste of time."

"I never feel very well now," answered poor Isabel, in an apologetic tone. "I am not equal to exertion."

"Then I'd go out for a drive, and take the air. Mopingindoors all day does invalids no good."

"But, since the ponies started last week and alarmed me, Archibald will not allow me to go out, unless he drives me himself."

"There's nothing the matter with John's driving," returned Miss Corny, in her spirit of contradiction. "And in the matter of experience, he has had quite as much as your husband, ma'am."

"John was driving when the ponies took fright."

"If ponies take fright once, it's no reason why they should a second time. Ring the bell, and order John to bring the carriage round: it is what I should advise."

Isabel shook her head decisively. "No: Archibald bade me not go out without him, unless it was in the close carriage. He is so careful of me just now; and he knows that I should not be alarmed with him, if the ponies did start, as I should be with a servant."

"It occurs to me that you have grown a little fanciful of late, Lady Isabel."

"I suppose I have," was the mock answer. "I shall be better when baby is born: and I shall never feel at a loss then; I shall have plenty to do."

"So will most of us, I expect," returned Miss Corny, with a groan. "Why, what on earth—why, if I don't believe here's Archibald! What brings him home at this time of day?"

"Archibald!" Out she flew in her glad surprise, meeting him in the hall, and falling upon him in her delight. "Oh, Archibald, my darling, it is as if the sun had shone! What have you come home for?"

"To drive you out, love," he whispered, as he took her back with him and rang the bell.

"You never told me this morning."

"Because I was not sure of being able to come. Peter, let the pony-carriage be brought round without delay. I am waiting for it."

"Why, where are you going with the pony-carriage?" exclaimed Miss Carlyle, as Isabel left the room to dress.

the child. She had been the mother of a son, and Lady Isabel to her daughter.

"I thank you, Mr. Carlyle, for your kind words. They have given me comfort in his memory."

"You are welcome, Mrs. Carlyle. Please come and sit down. You must be tired after your long walk."

"Please, Mr. Carlyle, I do not like to sit down. I am afraid I may fall over again."

"Lady Isabel, you must sit down. It is not safe for you to stand about."

"I am sometimes very weak, but now the children are here, I feel better. I am very desirous now to take a strong drink, but I have not the strength to do so. I will sit down when you tell me. I have always been weak, and I have not had a good night's sleep since the twelfth hour, where the servants have not previously been present."

It was hard upon Joyce. The Reverend Mr. Little, Miss Carlyle, and Miss Carbile were gathered in the dressing-room, round a table on which stood a rich china bowl, containing water for washing. Joyce, her pale face working with emotion, came into the room, carrying what looked like a bundle of flannel. Little said to Mr. Carlyle, for that bundle, in comparison with his care for his wife,

"Joyce," he whispered; "is all well still?"

"I believe so, sir."

The service commenced. The clergyman took the child. "What name?" he asked.

Mr. Carlyle had never thought about the name. But he replied pretty promptly,

"William." For he knew it was the name desired, and loved by Lady Isabel.

The minister dipped his fingers into the water. Joyce trembled, in much confusion, looking at her master.

"It is a little girl, sir. I beg your pardon. I assure I thought I had said so, but I am married to a never was before."

There was a pause, and then the minister spoke again. "Name this child."

"Isabel Lucy," said Mr. Carlyle. "You will be surprised at my resentful snif when I heard from Miss Corry. She had probably thought to hear him mention his own son, and mother, rather his wife and his mother."

Mr. Carlyle was not allowed to see his wife until the evening. His eyelashes pleased as he looked down on her. She returned his emotion with a faint smile parted her lips.

"I fear I have a really Archibald, but let us be thankful that it is over. How Archibald none can know. Now, when we have gone through this."

"I think there can be no harm. I hardly know what foolishness was until this time."

"That the baby is dead."

"That you are dead, darling, poor, and suffering always. Isobel," he whispered, kissing her face upon her bed. "I never used to say, knew what prayer was—the prayer of a heart in its sore need."

"Have you written to Lord Mount Severn?" she asked, a terawhile.

"Not yet."

"This afternoon," he replied,

"Why did you give baby my name—I asked?"

"Do you think I could have given it a prettier one? I don't."

"Why do you not bring a chair and sit down by me?"

He smiled and shook his head. "I wish I might. But they limited my stay with you to four minutes, and Wainwright has posted himself outside the door with his watch in his hand."

Quite true. There stood the careful surgeon: and the short interview was over almost as soon as it had begun.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WILSON'S GOSSIP.

THE baby lived, and appeared likely to live, and of course the next thing was to look out for a maid for it. Isabel did not grow strong very quickly; fever and weakness had a struggle with each other, and with her. One day when she was dressed and sitting in her easy-chair Miss Carlyle entered.

"Of all the servants in the neighbourhood, who should you suppose has come up after the place of nurse?" she said to Lady Isabel.

"Indeed I cannot guess."

"Why, Wilson, Mrs. Hare's maid. Three years and five months she has been with them, and now leaves in consequence of a quarrel with Barbara. Will you see her?"

"Is she likely to suit? Is she a good servant?"

"She's not a bad servant, as servants go," responded Miss Carlyle. "She's steady and respectable; but she has a tongue as long as from here to Lynneborough."

"That won't hurt baby," said Lady Isabel. "But if she has lived as lady's-maid, she probably does not understand the care of infants."

"Yes, she does. She was upper nurse at Squire Pinner's, before going to Mrs. Hare's. She lived there five years."

"I will see her," said Lady Isabel.

Miss Carlyle left the room to send the servant in, but came back first alone.

"Mind, Lady Isabel, don't you engage her. If she is likely to suit you, let her come again for the answer, and meanwhile I will go down to Mrs. Hare's and learn the ins and outs of her leaving. It is all very plausible for her to put it upon Barbara, but that is only one side of the question. Before engaging her, it may be as well to hear the other."

Of course this was only right. Isabel acquiesced, and the servant was introduced: a tall, pleasant-looking woman, with black eyes. Lady Isabel inquired why she was leaving Mrs. Hare's.

"My lady, it was through Miss Barbara's temper. Latterly—oh, for this year past—nothing has pleased her; she has grown nearly as imperious as the Justice himself. I have threatened many times to leave, and last evening we came to another outbreak, and I left this morning."

"Left entirely?"

"Yes, my lady. Miss Barbara provoked me so, that I said last night I would leave as soon as breakfast was over. And I did so. I should be very glad to take your situation, my lady, if you would please to try me."

"You have been the upper maid at Mrs. Haire's?"

"Oh yes, my lady."

"Then possibly this situation might not suit you so well as you imagine. Joyce is the upper servant here, and you would, in a manner, be under her. I have great confidence in Joyce; and in case of my illness or absence, Joyce would superintend the nursery."

"I should not mind that," was the applicant's answer. "We all like Joyce, my lady."

A few more questions, and then the woman was told to come again in the evening for her answer. Mrs. Carlyle went to the Grove for the "ins and outs" of the affair, when Mrs. Haire frankly stated that she had nothing to urge against Wilson, except her hasty manner of leaving, of which she believed the chief blame to be due to Barbara. Wilson was therefore engaged, and was to enter upon her new service the following morning.

In the afternoon succeeding to it, Isabel was lying on the sofa in her bedroom, asleep, as was supposed. In point of fact, she was in that state, half sleep, half wakeful delirium, which those who suffer from weakness and fever know only too well. Suddenly she was aroused from it by hearing her own name mentioned in the adjoining room, where sat Joyce and Wilson the latter holding the sleeping infant on her knee, the former sewing, the door between the rooms being ajar.

"How ill she looks," observed Wilson.

"Who?" asked Joyce.

"Her ladyship. She looks as if she'd never get over it."

"She is getting over it quickly, now," returned Joyce. "If you had seen her a week ago, you would not say she was looking ill now—speaking by comparison."

"My goodness! would not somebody's hopes be up again if anything should happen?"

"Nonsense!" crossly returned Joyce.

"You may cry out 'nonsense' for ever, Joyce, but they would," went on Wilson. "And she would snap him up, to a dead certainty, she'd never let him escape her a second time. She is as much in love with him as she ever was."

"It was all talk and fancy," said Joyce. "West Lynne must be busy. Mr. Carlyle never cared for her."

"That's more than you know. I have seen a little, Joyce; I have seen him kiss her."

"A pack of rubbish!" remarked Joyce. "That tells nothing."

"I don't say it does: he gave her that locket and chain she wears."

"Who wears?" retorted Joyce, determined not graciously to countenance the subject. "I don't want to hear anything about it."

"Who, now! Why, Miss Barbara. She has hardly had it off her neck since. my belief is, she wears it in her sleep."

"More simpleton she!" echoed Joyce.

"The night before he left West Lynne to marry Lady Isabel--and didn't the news come upon us like a thunderclap!--Miss Barbara had been at Miss Carlyle's, and he brought her home. A lovely night it was, the moon rising, and nearly as light as day. She somehow broke her parole in coming home, and when they reached our gate there was a love scene."

"Were you a third in it?" sarcastically demanded Joyce.

"Yes--without meaning to be. That skinfint old justice won't allow folklaw indigos, and there's no seeing anybody in the sly in that condemned kitchen-garden, where there's nothing higher than a camomile-flower; so the only chance we have is to get half an hour's chat amidst the grove trees, in front, if a friend comes up. I was expecting somebody that evening--a horrid faithless fellow he turned out, and went, three months after, and married the barmaid at the Buck's Head--and I was in the trees waiting for him. Up came Mr. Carlyle and Miss Barbara. She wanted him to go in, but he would not, and they stood there. Something was said about the locket, and about his giving her a piece of his hair to put in it: I could not catch the words distinctly, and I did not dare to stir nearer, for fear of their hearing me. It was a regular love scene; I could hear enough for that. If ever anybody thought to be Mrs. Carlyle, Barbara Hare did that night."

"Why, you great gaby! You have just said it was the night before he went to be married."

"I don't care; she did. After he was gone, I saw her lift up her hands and her face in ecstasy, and say he could never know how much she loved him until she was his wife. Be you very sure, Joyce, many a love passage had passed between them two; but I suppose when my lady was thrown in his way he couldn't resist her rank and her beauty, and the old love was cast over. It is in the nature of man to be fickle, especially those that can boast of their own good looks, like Mr. Carlyle."

"Mr. Carlyle's not fickle."

"I can tell you some more yet. Two or three days after that, Miss Corny came up to our house with the news of his marriage. I was in mistress's bedroom, and they were in the room underneath, the windows open, and I heard Miss Corny tell the tale, for I was leaning out. Up came Miss Barbara upon an excuse and flew into her room, and I went into the corridor. A few moments, and I heard a noise; it was a sort of wail, or groan, and I opened the door softly, fearing she might be fainting. Joyce, if my heart never ached for anybody before, it ached then. She was lying on the floor, her hands writhed together, and her poor face all white, like one in mortal agony. I'd have given a quarter's wages to be able to say a word of comfort to her; but I didn't dare interfere with such sorrow as that. I came out again and shut the door without her seeing me."

"How thoroughly stupid she must have been," uttered Joyce, "to go caring for one who did not care for her!"

"I tell you, Joyce, you don't know that he did not care. You are as obstinate as the justice! And I wish to goodness you wouldn't

interrupt me. They take up here to pay the wedding visit, master, mistress, and she's gone off state in the same chariot with the coachman and Jasper; if you have any objection at all, you won't fail to recollect it. Miss Barbara promised Wilson that she would spend the rest of the day."

"I remember it."

"I was sent to attend her home in the evening, Jasper being off. I came the field way; for the dust by the road was enough to smother one, and at the last stile-but one, what do you think I came upon?"

Joyce lifted her eyes. "A snake, perhaps."

"I came upon Miss Barbara and Mr. Carlyle. What had passed, nobody knows but themselves. She was leading against the stile, crying; sobs breaking from her, like one might expect to hear from a breaking heart. It seemed as if she had been reproaching him, as if some explanation had passed, and I heard him say that from henceforth they could only be brother and sister. I spoke soon, for fear they should see me, and Mr. Carlyle got over the stile. Miss Barbara said to him that he need not come any farther, but he just held out his arm and came with her to our back gate. I went on then to open the door, and I saw him with his head bent down to her, and her two hands held in his. We don't know how it was between them, I tell you."

"At any rate, she is a downright fool to suffer herself to love him still!" uttered Joyce, indignantly.

"So she is, but she does do it. She'll often steal out of the gate about the time she knows he'll be passing, and watch him by, not letting him see her. It is nothing but her unhappiness, her jealousy of Lady Isabel, that makes her cross: I assure you, Joyce, in this past year she has so changed that she's not like the same person. If Mr. Carlyle should ever get tired of my lady, and——"

"Wilson!" harshly interrupted Joyce. "Have the goodness to recollect yourself."

"What have I said now? Nothing but truth. Men are shamefully fickle; husbands worse than sweethearts, and I'm sure I'm not thinking of anything wrong. But to go back to the argument that we began with—I say that if anything happened to my lady, Miss Barbara, as sure as fate, would step into her shoes."

"Nothing is going to happen to her," returned Joyce, with composure.

"I hope it is not, now or later—for the sake of this dear little innocent thing upon my lap," went on the undaunted Wilson. "She would not make a very kind stepmother, for it is certain that where the first wife has been hated, her children won't be loved. She would turn Mr. Carlyle against them——"

"I tell you what it is, Wilson," interrupted Joyce, in a firm, unmistakable tone, "if you think so pursue these sort of topics at East Lynne, I shall inform my lady that you are unsuited to the situation."

"I dare say!"

"And you know that when I make up my mind to a thing, I do it," continued Joyce. "Miss Carlyle may well say you have the longest tongue in West Lynne; but you might have the grace to know that

this subject is one more unsuited to it than another, whether you are eating Mr. Hare's bread, or whether you are eating Mr. Carlyle's. Another word, Wilson : it appears to me that you have carried on a prying system in Mrs. Hare's house ; do not attempt such a thing in this."

" You were always one of the straitlaced sort, Joyce," cried Wilson, laughing good-humouredly. " But now that I have had my say out, I shall stop ; and you need not fear I should be such a simpleton as to go prattling of this kind of thing to the servants."

Now just fancy this conversation penetrating to Lady Isabel. She heard it, every word. It is all very well to oppose the argument, " Who attends to the gossip of servants ? " Let me tell you it depends upon what the subject may be, whether the gossip is attended to or not. It might not, and indeed would not, have made so great an impression upon her had she been in strong health, but she was weak, feverish, in a state of partial delirium : and she hastily took up the idea that Archibald Carlyle had never loved her, that he had admired her and made her his wife in his ambition, but that his heart had been given to Barbara Hare.

A pretty state of excitement she worked herself into as she lay there ; jealousy and fever, ay, and love too, playing pranks with her brain. It was near the dinner-hour, and when Mr. Carlyle entered, he was startled to see her ; her pallid cheeks were burning with a hectic flush, and her eyes glistened with fever.

" Isabel, you are worse ! " he uttered, approaching her with a quick step.

She partially rose from the sofa, and clasped him in her emotion. " Oh, Archibald ! Archibald ! " she uttered, " don't marry her ! I could not rest in my grave."

Mr. Carlyle, in his puzzled astonishment, believed her to be labouring under some temporary hallucination, the result of weakness. He attempted to soothe her, but it seemed that she could not be soothed. She burst into a storm of tears, and began again : wild words.

" She would ill-treat my child ; she would draw your love from it, and from my memory. Archibald, you must not marry her."

" You must be speaking from the influence of a dream, Isabel," he soothingly said ; " you have been asleep, and are not yet awake. Be still, and recollection will return to you. There, love ; rest upon me."

" To think of her as your wife brings pain enough to kill me," she continued to reiterate. " Promise me that you will not marry her : Archibald, promise it ! "

" I will promise you anything in reason," he replied, bewildered by her words, " but I do not know what you mean. There is no possibility of my marrying any one, Isabel : you are my wife."

" But if I die ? I may ; you know I may ; and many think I shall—do not let her usurp my place."

" Indeed she shall not—whoever you may be talking of. What have you been dreaming ? Who is it that is troubling your mind ? "

" Archibald, do you need to ask ? Did you love no one before you married me ? Perhaps you have loved her since—perhaps you love her still ! "

Mr. Carlyle began to discern "method in her madness." "He changed his cheering tone to one of grave earnestness. "Of whom do you speak, Isabel?"

"Of Barbara Hare."

He knitted his brow ; he was both annoyed and vexed. What had put this bygone nonsense into his wife's head? He quitted the sofa where he had been supporting her, and stood upright before her, calm, dignified, almost solemn in his seriousness.

"Isabel, what notion you can possibly have picked up about myself and Barbara Hare, I am unable to conceive. I never loved Barbara Hare ; I never entertained the faintest shadow of love for her ; either before my marriage or since. You must tell me what has given rise to this idea in your mind."

"But she loved you."

A moment's hesitation ; for of course Mr. Carlyle was conscious that she had ; but, taking all the circumstances into consideration, more especially how he learnt the fact, he could not in honour acknowledge it even to his wife. "If it was so, Isabel, she was more reprehensibly foolish than I should have given Barbara's good sense credit for : a woman may almost as well lose herself, as suffer herself to love unsought. If she did give her love to me, I can only say I was utterly unconscious of it. Believe me, you have as much cause to be jealous of Cornelia, as you have of Barbara Hare."

Isabel sighed. It was a sigh of relief, and her breath grew calmer. She felt inexpressibly reassured. Mr. Carlyle bent his head, and spoke in a tender, though a pained tone.

"I had not thought that the past year was quite thrown away. What proof can a man give of true and earnest love, that I have not given to you?"

She looked up, her eyelashes wet with contrition, took his hand and held it between hers. "Don't be angry with me, Archibald : the trouble and the doubt would not have arisen had I cared for you less."

He smiled again, his own fond smile, and bent lower. "And now tell me what put this into your brain?"

An impulse arose within her that she would tell him all ; the few words dropped by Susan and Joyce twelve months before ; the conversation she had just overheard ; but in that moment of renewed confidence it appeared to her that she must have been very foolish to attach importance to it—that a sort of humiliation, in listening to the converse of servants, was reflected on her ; and she remained silent.

"Has any one been striving to bias your mind against me?" he resumed.

"Archibald! no. Would any one dare to do it?"

"Then did you dream ?—and could not forget it on awaking?"

"I do sometimes dream strange things, especially in my feverish afternoon sleeps. I think I am a little delirious at times, Archibald, and do not know what is real, and what is fancy."

The answer, while expressing correctly her physical state, was an evasive one, but not evasively did it fall upon the ear of Mr. Carlyle. It presented to him the only probable solution to the enigma, and he never questioned it.

"Don't have any more of these dreams if you can help it," he said. "Regard them for what they are—illusions, neither pleasant for you, nor fair to me. I am bound to you by fond ties as well as by legal ones, remember, Isabel; and it is out of Barbara Hare's power to step in between us."

There never was a passion in this world, there never will be one, so fantastic, so delusive, so powerful as jealousy. Mr. Carlyle dismissed the episode from his thoughts; he believed his wife's emotion to have arisen simply from a feverish dream, and never supposed but that, with the dream, its recollection would pass away from her. Not so. Implicitly relying upon her husband's words at the moment, feeling quite ashamed of her own suspicion, Lady Isabel afterwards suffered the unhappy fear to regain its influence; the ill-starred revelations of Wilson reasserted their power, over mastering the denial of Mr. Carlyle. Shakespeare calls jealousy yellow and green: I think it may be called black and white, for it most assuredly views white as black, and black as white. The most fanciful surmises wear the aspect of truth, the greatest improbabilities appear as consistent realities. Isabel said not another word to her husband; and the feeling—you will understand this if you have ever been foolish enough to sun yourself in its delights—only caused her to grow more attached to him, to be more eager for his love. But certain it is that Barbara Hare dwelt on her heart as an incubus.

CHAPTER XIX.

CAPTAIN THORN AT WEST LYNNE.

"BARBARA, how fine the day seems!"

"It is a beautiful day, mamma."

"I think I should be all the better for going out."

"I am sure you would be, mamma," was Barbara's answer. "If you went out more, you would find the benefit of doing so: every fine day you ought to do so."

"But I have not spirits for it, dear," sighed Mrs. Hare. "The first bright days of spring, the first warm days of summer, always have an exhilarating effect upon me. I thank I must go out to-day. There's your papa in the garden: ask him if it will be convenient to him."

Barbara was darting off, but arrested her steps for a moment. "Mamma, you have been talking these three weeks of buying the new dresses and other things that we require: why not do so to-day?"

"Well—I don't know," hesitated Mrs. Hare, in the irresolution natural to her.

"Yes, yes; you will not find a better opportunity." And away went Barbara.

Justice Hare was in his front garden imperiously pointing out to his servant, Benjamin, something which had not been done according to his directions. Benjamin fulfilled the duties of coachman and groom at the Grove, filling up his spare time with gardening. He was a married man, and slept at home, though he took his meals in

the house; coming to it early, and going away late. The justice was in his dressing-gown and wig, and was dressing himself into a passion when Barbara approached. She was the only one of the three children not afraid of her father; Barbara stood in awe of him, but not so utterly as the others.

"Papa."

"What do you want?" said the justice, getting round his portly person.

"Mamma thinks that it would do her good to go out this fine day. Can we have the carriage?"

The justice paused before he answered, and looked up at the sky. "Where does she want to be off to?"

"We wish to do some shopping, please, papa. Only in West Lynne," hastily added Barbara, seeing a cloud rise on the paternal countenance. "Not at Lynneborough."

"And your mamma thinks I am going to drive her!" cried Justice Hare. "I'd see the shops further, first. The last time you and she went into one, you kept me waiting an hour and a half."

"Benjamin can drive us, papa."

Mr. Hare strode pompously across the grass to the dining-room window, threw it up, and addressed his wife. Barbara drew close, and stood timidly at his side.

"Do you say you want to go shopping to-day, Anne?"

"Not particularly to-day," was the meek answer, meekly delivered; "any day will do for it. Do you think of using the carriage yourself?"

"I don't know," replied the justice. The fact is, he had not thought about it at all; but he liked every scheme, every movement to be proposed by himself, to be regulated by his own will.

"The day is so fine that I think I should like to take advantage of it," said Mrs. Hare. "And Barbara must have her summer dresses bought."

"She's always having dresses bought," growled the justice.

"Oh, papa! I——"

"Silence, young lady; you have twice as many as you need."

"Perhaps, Richard, I might manage to walk in and back again, without being much fatigued, if you cannot spare me the carriage," said Mrs. Hare, gently.

"And have you laid up for a week! What next! The idea of your walking into West Lynne and back again! that would be a piece of folly."

The justice shut down the window, and strode back to Benjamin, leaving Mrs. Hare and Barbara at an uncertainty, were they to go, or were they not? Barbara went indoors to her mother.

"Barbara, dear, I wonder where your papa was thinking of going in the carriage?"

"I don't believe he was going anywhere," replied independent Miss Barbara.

"Oh, child!"

"Well, I don't. Only he always must oppose everybody. Mamma, I do think you might walk in, and we could come back in one of Coke's frys."

Mrs. Hare shook her head. "I have no doubt I could walk quite well one way, Barbara; but I should not think of doing so, unless your papa approved."

Barbara was looking from the window. She saw Benjamin gather up his garden tools and put them away. He then crossed to the narrow side-path which led down by the house to the back, where the stables were situated. Barbara ran through the hall and intercepted him.

"Has papa given any orders about the carriage, Benjamin?"

"Yes, miss. I am to drive you and mistress into West Lynne. I was to get ready directly," he said.

Back waltzed Barbara. "Mamma, it is all right: Benjamin has gone to get the carriage ready. You would like luncheon before you go? I will order in the tray."

"Anything you please, my dear," said the sweet-tempered, gentle woman. "I don't know why, but I feel glad to go out to-day: perhaps because it is so lovely."

Benjamin made ready his carriage and himself, drove out of the yard, and brought the carriage round to the front gate. As Mrs. Hare and Barbara went down the path, Mr. Hare was in the garden still.

"Thank you, Richard," she said, as she passed him, a loving smile lighting her delicate face.

"Mind you are home by dinner-time, and don't let Barbara spend too much money," cried the justice, in return. But he was not polite enough to go and hand them in.

The carriage—or phaeton, as it was often called—was a somewhat old-fashioned concern, as many country things often are. A small box in front for the driver, and a wide seat with a head behind, accommodating Barbara well between them when Mr. and Mrs. Hare both sat in it. Mr. Hare, however, generally drove himself, taking no servant. The head was down to-day, but it was found useful in rainy weather; and there were a double set of poles, so that one horse or a pair might be driven in it. Very rarely, never unless they were going a distance, was a pair used; the long-tailed, black coach-horses were taken out in turn, for the justice kept only that pair, and a saddle-horse for himself.

Benjamin drew the rug carefully over his mistress's knees—the servants did not like Mr. Hare, but would have laid down their lives for him—ascended to his box, and drove them to their destination, the linendraper's. It was an excellent shop, situated a little beyond the office of Mr. Carlyle, and Mrs. Hare and Barbara were soon engaged in that occupation said to possess a fascination for all women. They had been deep in it about an hour, when Mrs. Hare discovered that her bag was missing.

"I must have left it in the carriage, Barbara. Go and bring it, will you, my dear? the pattern of that silk is in it."

Barbara went out. The carriage and Benjamin, and the sleek old horse were all waiting drowsily together. Barbara could not see the bag, and she appealed to the servant.

"Find mamma's bag, Benjamin. It must be somewhere in the carriage."

Benjamin got off his box, and began to search. Barbara waited, gazing listlessly down the street. The sun was shining brilliantly, and its rays fell upon the large cable chain of a gentleman who was sauntering idly up the pavement, making its gold links and its drooping scal and key glitter, as they crossed his waistcoat. It shone also upon the enamelled gold studs of his shirt front, and as he suddenly raised his ungloved hand, a white hand, to stroke his moustache—by which action you may know a vain man—a diamond ring gleamed with a light that was positively dazzling. Involuntarily Barbara thought of the description her brother Richard had given of certain dazzling jewels worn by another.

She watched him advance. He was a handsome man of, perhaps, seven or eight and twenty, tall, slender, and well made, his eyes and hair black. A very pleasant expression sat upon his countenance, and on the left hand he wore a light buff kid glove, and was swinging its fellow by the fingers, apparently in deep thought, as he softly whistled to himself. But for the great light cast at that moment by the sun, Barbara might not have noticed the jewellery, or connected it in her mind with the other jewellery in that unhappy secret.

" Halloo ! Thorn, is that you ? Just step over here ! "

The speaker was Otway Bethel, who was on the opposite side of the street ; the spoken-to, the gentleman with the jewellcry. But the latter was in a brown study, and did not hear. Bethel called out again, louder.

" Captain Thorn ! "

That was heard. Captain Thorn nodded, and turned short off across the street. Barbara stood as one in a dream, her brain, her mind, her fancy all a confused mass together.

" Here's the bag, Miss Barbara. It had got among the folds of the rug."

Benjamin held it out to her, but she took no notice of it : she was unconscious of all external things, save one. That she beheld the real murderer of Hallijohn she entertained no manner of doubt. In every particular he tallied with the description given by Richard : tall, dark, vain, handsome, delicate hands, jewellery, and—Captain Thorn ! Barbara's checks grew white, and her heart turned sick.

" The bag, Miss Barbara."

But Barbara was gone, leaving Benjamin and the bag. She had caught sight of Mr. Wainwright, the surgeon, at a little distance, and sped towards him.

" Mr. Wainwright," began she, forgetting ceremony in her agitation, " you see that gentleman talking to Otway Bethel. Who is he ? "

Mr. Wainwright had to put his glasses across the bridge of his nose before he could answer, for he was short-sighted. " That ? Oh, it is a Captain Thorn. He is visiting the Herberts, I believe."

" Where does he come from ? Where does he live ? " reiterated Barbara, in her eagerness.

" I don't know anything about him. I saw him this morning with young Smith, and he told me he was a friend of the Herberts. You are not looking well, Miss Barbara."

She made no answer. Captain Thorn and Mr. Bethel came walking

down the street, and the latter saluted her, but she was too confused to respond to it. Mr. Wainwright then wished her good day, and Barbara walked slowly back. Mrs. Hare was appearing at the shop door.

"My dear, how long you are! Can no^t the bag be found?"

"I went to speak to Mr. Wainwright," answered Barbara, mechanically taking the bag from Benjamin and giving it to her mother, her whole heart and eyes still absorbed with that one object moving away in the distance.

"You look pale, child. Are you well?"

"Oh yes, quite. Let us get our shopping over, mamma."

She moved on to their places at the counter as she spoke, eager to "get it over" and be at home, that she might have time for thought. Mrs. Hare wondered what had come to her; the pleasant interest previously displayed in their purchases was now gone, and she sat inattentive and absorbed.

"Now, my dear, it is only waiting for you to choose. Which of the two silks will you have?"

"Either. Any. Take which you like, mamma."

"Barbara, what has come to you?"

"I believe I am tired," said Barbara, with a forced laugh, as she compelled herself to pay some sort of attention. "I don't like the green: I will take the other."

They arrived at home. Barbara was five minutes alone in her chamber, before dinner was on the table. All the conclusion she could come to, was that she could do nothing, except tell the facts to Archibald Carlyle.

How could she contrive to see him? The business might admit of no delay. She supposed she must go to East Lynne that evening; but where would be her excuse for it at home? Puzzling over it, she went down to dinner. During the meal, Mrs. Hare began talking of some silk she had purchased for a man's. She should have it made like Miss Carlyle's new one. When Miss Carlyle was at the Grove the other day, about Wilson's character, she had offered her the pattern, and she, Mrs. Hare, would send one of the servants up for it, after dinner.

"Oh, mamma, let me go!" burst forth Barbara. She spoke so vehemently, that the justice paused in his carving, and demanded what ailed her. Barbara made some timid excuse.

"Her eagerness is natural, Richard," smiled Mrs. Hare. "Barbara thinks she shall get a peep at the baby, I expect. All young folks are fond of babies."

Barbara's face flushed: but she did not contradict the opinion. She could not eat her dinner, for she was too full of poor Richard: she played with it and then sent away her plate, almost untouched.

"That's through the ~~finery~~ she has been buying," pronounced Justice Hare. "Her head's stuffed with it."

No opposition was offered to Barbara's going to East Lynne. She reached it just as dinner was over. It was for Miss Carlyle she asked.

"Miss Carlyle is not at home, miss. She is spending the day out; and my lady does not receive visitors yet."

It was a sort of checkmate. Barbara was compelled to say she would see Mr. Carlyle. Peter ushered her into the drawing-room, and Mr. Carlyle came to her.

"I am so very sorry to disturb you; to have asked for you," began Barbara, with a burning face, for a certain evening interview of hers with him, twelve months before, was disagreeably present to her. Never, since that evening of agitation, had Barbara suffered herself to betray emotion to Mr. Carlyle: her manners to him had been calm, courteous, and indifferent. And she now more frequently called him "Mr. Carlyle" than "Archibald."

"Take a seat, take a seat, Barbara."

"I asked for Miss Carlyle," she continued, "for mamma is in want of a pattern that she promised to lend her; but, in point of fact, it was you I wished to see. You remember the Lieutenant Thorn, whom Richard spoke of as being the real criminal?"

"Yes."

"I think he is at West Lynne."

Mr. Carlyle was aroused to eager interest. "He! That same Thorn?"

"It can be no other. Mamma and I were shopping to-day, and I went out for her bag which she had left in the carriage. While Benjamin was finding it, I saw a stranger coming up the street; a tall, good-looking, dark-haired man, with a conspicuous gold chain and studs. The sun was full upon him, causing the ornaments to shine, especially a diamond ring he wore, for he had one hand raised to his face. The thought flashed over me, 'That is like the description Richard gave of the man Thorn.' Why the idea should have occurred to me in that strange manner I do not know, but it most assuredly did occur, though I did not really suppose him to be the same. Just then I heard him spoken to by some one on the other side of the street; it was Otway Bethel, and he called him *Captain Thorn*."

"That is curious indeed, Barbara. I did not know any stranger was at West Lynne."

"I saw Mr. Wainwright, and asked him who it was. He said a Captain Thorn, a friend of the Herberts. A Lieutenant Thorn four or five years ago would probably be Captain Thorn now."

Mr. Carlyle nodded, and there was a pause.

"What can be done?" asked Barbara.

Mr. Carlyle was passing one hand over his brow; it was a habit of his when deep in thought. "It is hard to say what is to be done, Barbara. The description you give of this man certainly tallies with that given by Richard. Did he look like a gentleman?"

"Very much so. A remarkably aristocratic-looking man, as it struck me."

Mr. Carlyle again nodded assentingly. He remembered Richard's words, when describing the other: "an out-and-out aristocrat." "Of course, Barbara, the first thing must be to try and ascertain whether it is the same," he observed. "If we find that it is, then we must deliberate upon future measures. I will see what I can find out, and let you know."

Barbara rose. Mr. Carlyle escorted her across the hall, and then strolled down the park by her side, deep in the subject; and quite unconscious that Lady Isabel's jealous eyes were watching them from her dressing-room window.

"You say he seemed intimate with Otway Bethel?"

"As to being intimate, I do not know. Otway Bethel spoke as though he knew him."

"This must have caused excitement to Mrs. Hare."

"You forget that mamma was not told anything about Thorn," was Barbara's answer. "The uncertainty would have worried her to death. All Richard said to her was, that he was innocent, that it was a stranger who did the deed, and she asked for no particulars: she has implicit faith in Richard's truth."

"True; I did forget," replied Mr. Carlyle. "I wish we could find out some one who knew the other Thorn. To ascertain that they were the same would be a great point gained."

He went as far as the park gates with Barbara, shook hands, and wished her good evening. Scarcely had she departed, when Mr. Carlyle saw two gentlemen advancing from the opposite direction, in one of whom he recognized Tom Herbert, and the other—instinct told him—was Captain Thorn. He waited until they came up.

"If this isn't lucky, seeing you," cried Mr. Tom Herbert, who was a free-and-easy sort of gentleman, the second son of a brother-justice of Mr. Hare's. "I wish to goodness you'd give us a draught of your cider, Carlyle. We went up to Beauchamp's for a stroll, but found them all out; and I'm awfully thirsty. Captain Thorn, Carlyle."

Mr. Carlyle invited them to his house, and ordered refreshments. Young Herbert coolly threw himself into an arm-chair and lit a cigar.

"Come, Thorn," cried he, "here's a weed for you."

Captain Thorn glanced towards Mr. Carlyle: he appeared of a far more gentlemanly nature than Tom Herbert.

"You'll have one too, Carlyle," said Herbert, holding out his cigar-case. "Oh, I forgot; you are a muss, don't smoke one twice in a year. I say, how's Lady Isabel?"

"Very ill still."

"By Jove! is she, though? Tell her I am sorry to hear it, will you, Carlyle? But—I say! will she smell the smoke?" asked he, with a mixture of alarm and concern in his face.

Mr. Carlyle reassured him upon that point, and turned to Captain Thorn.

"Are you acquainted with this neighbourhood?"

Captain Thorn smiled. "I only reached West Lynne yesterday.

"You were never here before, then?" continued Mr. Carlyle, setting down the last as a probably evasive answer.

"No."

"He and my brother Jack, you know, are in the same regiment," put in Tom Herbert, with scant ceremony. "Jack had invited him down for some fishing, and Thorn arrives. But he never sent word he was coming. Jack had given him up, and is off on some Irish expedition, the deuce knows where. Precious unlucky that it should have happened so. Thorn says he shall cut short his stay, and go again."

The conversation turned upon fishing, and in the heat of argument the stranger mentioned a certain pond, and its famous eels—"the Low Pond." Mr. Carlyle looked at him speaking, however, in a careless manner.

"Which do you mean? We have two ponds not far apart, each called the 'Low Pond.'"

"I mean the one on an estate about three miles from here : Squire Thorpe's, unless I am mistaken."

Mr. Carlyle smiled. "I think you must have been in the neighbourhood before, Captain Thorn. Squire Thorpe is dead, and the property has passed to his daughter's husband, and that Low Pond was filled up three years ago."

"I have heard a friend mention it," was Captain Thorn's reply, spoken in an indifferent tone, though he evidently wished not to pursue the subject.

Mr. Carlyle, by easy degrees, turned the conversation upon Swainson, the place whence Richard Harc's Captain Thorn was suspected to have come. The present Captain Thorn said he knew it "a little," he had once been "staying there a short time." Mr. Carlyle became almost convinced that Barbara's suspicions were correct. The descriptions certainly agreed, as far as he could judge, in the most minute particulars. The man before him wore two rings, a diamond—and a very beautiful diamond, too—on the one hand, a seal ring on the other ; his hands were delicate to a degree, and his handkerchief, a cambric one of unusually fine texture, was not quite guiltless of scent : a mark of dandyism, which, in the other Captain Thorn, used considerably to annoy Richard. Mr. Carlyle quitted the room for a moment, and summoned Joyce to him.

"My lady has been asking for you, sir," said Joyce.

"Tell her I will be up the moment these gentlemen leave. Joyce," he added, "find an excuse for coming into the room presently ; you can bring something or other in ; I want you to look at this stranger who is with young Mr. Herbert. Notice him well ; I fancy you may have seen him before."

Mr. Carlyle returned to the room, leaving Joyce surprised. But she presently followed, taking in some water, and lingered a few minutes, apparently placing the things on the table in better order.

When the two departed, Mr. Carlyle called Joyce, before proceeding to his wife's room. "Well?" he questioned, "did you recognize him?"

"Not at all, sir. He seemed quite strange to me."

"Cast your thoughts back, Joyce. Did you never see him in years gone by?"

Joyce looked puzzled, but she replied in the negative.

"Is he the man, think you, who used to ride over from Swainson to see Afy?"

Joyce's face flushed crimson. "Oh, sir!" was all she uttered.

"The name is the same, Thorn : I thought it possible the man might be the same also," observed Mr. Carlyle.

"Sir, I cannot say. I never saw that 'Captain Thorn' but once, and I don't know—I don't know"—Joyce spoke slowly and with considera-

tion—"that I should at all know him again. I did not think of him when I looked at this gentleman ; but, at any rate, no appearance in this one struck upon my memory as being familiar to me."

So, from Joyce Mr. Carlyle obtained no clue, one way or the other. The following day he sought out Olway Bethel.

"Are you intimate with that Captain Thorn who is staying with the Herberts?" asked he.

"Yes," answered Bethel, dubiously, "if passing a couple of hours in his company can constitute intimacy. That's all I have seen of Thorn."

"Are you sure?" pursued Mr. Carlyle.

"Sure!" returned Bethel; "why, what are you driving at now? I called in at Herberts' the night before last, and Tom asked me to stay the evening. Thorn had just arrived. A jolly bout we had : cigars and cold punch."

"Bethel," said Mr. Carlyle, dashing to the point, "is it the Thorn who used to go after Afy Halljohn? Come, you can tell if you like."

Bethel remained dumb for a moment, apparently with amazement. "What a confounded he!" uttered he, at length. "Why, it's no more than Thorn than—What Thorn?" he broke off, abruptly.

"You are equivocating, Bethel. The Thorn who was mixed up—or said to be—in the Halljohn affair—is this the same man?"

"You are a fool, Carlyle: which is what I never took you to be yet," was Mr. Bethel's rejoinder, spoken in a savage tone. "I have told you that I never knew there was any Thorn mixed up with Afy, and I should like to know why my word is not to be believed! I never saw Thorn in my life till I saw him the other night at the Herberts', and that I would take an oath to, if put to it."

Bethel quitted Mr. Carlyle with the last word, and the latter gazed after him, revolving points in his brain. The mention of Thorn's name (the one spoken of by Richard Hare) appeared to excite some sore feeling in Bethel's mind, rousing it to irritation. Mr. Carlyle remembered that it had done so previously, and now it had done so again. And yet, Bethel was an easy-natured man in general, far better tempered than principled. That there was something hidden, some mystery connected with the affair, Mr. Carlyle felt sure, but he could not attempt so much as a guess at what it might be; and his interview with Bethel brought him no nearer the point he wished to find out—whether this Thorn was the same man. In walking back to his office, he met Mr. Tom Herbert.

"Does Captain Thorn purpose making a long stay with you?" he stopped him to inquire.

"He's gone: I have just seen him off by the train," was the reply of Tom Herbert. "It seemed rather slow work for him without Jack, so he shortened his visit, and says he will pay us one when Jack's to the fore."

As Mr. Carlyle went home to dinner that evening, he entered the Grove, ostensibly to make a short call on Mrs. Hara. Barbara, on the tenterhooks of impatience, accompanied him outside when he departed, and walked down the path.

"What have you learned?" she eagerly asked.

"Nothing satisfactory," was the reply of Mr. Carlyle. "The man is gone."

"Gone!" said Barbara.

Mr. Carlyle explained. He told her how they had come up his house the previous evening after Barbara's departure, and his encounter with Tom Herbert that day; he mentioned, also, his interview with Bothel.

"Can he have gone away on purpose, fearing consequences?" wondered Barbara.

"Scarcely: or why should he have come?"

"You did not suffer any hindrance to escape you last night, causing him to suspect that he was doubted?"

"Not any. You would make a bad lawyer, Barbara."

"Who or what is he?"

"An officer in her Majesty's service, in John Herbert's regiment. I ascertained no more. Tom said he was of good family. But I cannot help suspecting that it is the same man."

"Can nothing more be done?"

"Nothing, in the present stage of the affair," concluded Mr. Carlyle, as he passed through the gate to continue his way. "We can only wait on again with what patience we may, hoping that time will bring about its own elucidation."

Barbara pressed her forehead down on the cold iron of the gate as his footsteps died away. "Ay, to wait on," she murmured, "to wait on in dreary pain; to wait on, perhaps for years, perhaps for ever! And poor Richard—wearing out his days in poverty and exile!"

Lady Isabel recovered, and grew strong, and a few years passed smoothly on, no special event occurring to note them.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

GOING FROM HOME.

A FEW years had passed.

"I should recommend a complete change of scene, Mr. Carlyle. Say, some place on the French or Belgian coast. Sea-bathing might do wonders."

"Should you think it well for her to go so far from home?"

"I should. Where there is any chronic or confirmed disorder, one we can grapple with, I don't care a straw for change of scene or air; a patient is as well at his own home as away from it. A certain treatment must be gone through, surgical or physical, and it is of little moment whether it is pursued on a mountain in Switzerland or in a vale in Devonshire. But in these cases of protracted weakness, where you can do nothing but try to coax the strength back again, change of air and scene are of immense benefit."

"I will propose it to her," said Mr. Carlyle.

"I have just done so," replied Dr. Martin, who was the other speaker. "She met it with objection. This I expected, for invalids naturally feel a disinclination to move from home. But it is necessary that she should go."

The object of their conversation was Lady Isabel. There were three children now at East Lynne : Isabel, William, and Archibald ; the latter twelve months old. Lady Isabel had, a month or two ago, been attacked with illness : she recovered from it ; that is, she recovered from the disorder ; but it had left her in an alarming state of prostration. Mr. Wainwright tried in vain to grapple with the weakness ; she seemed to grow worse, rather than better ; and Dr. Martin was summoned from Lyneborough. The best thing he could recommend—as you have heard—was change of scene and air.

Lady Isabel was unwilling to take the advice ; more especially to go so far as the "French coast," and, but for a circumstance that seemed to have happened purposely to induce her to decide, would probably never "have gone. Mrs. Duche—the reader may not have forgotten her name—had, in conjunction with her husband, the Honourable Augustus, somewhat rufa herself out at elbows, and found it desirable to enter for a time on the less expensive life of the Continent. For eighteen months she had been staying in Paris, the education of her younger daughters being the plea put forth for the sojourn : and a very convenient plea it is, and serves hundreds. Isabel had had two or three letters from her

during her absence, and she now received another, saying that they were going to spend a month or two at Boulogne-sur-Mer. Dr. Martin and Mr. Wainwright declared that this must remove all Lady Isabel's unwillingness to go from home, for Mrs. Ducie's society would do away with the loneliness she had anticipated : a loneliness which had been the ostensible reason of her objection.

"Boulogne-sur-Mer, of all places in the world!" remonstrated Lady Isabel. "It is said to be crowded and vulgar."

Mr. Carlyle also demurred at Boulogne-sur-Mer. It did not stand well in his estimation. It was not a place he cared to send his wife to : more especially as he could not remain there with her. Trouville, a pleasant, retired watering-place, near Harfleur, and little known in those days, had been the one chosen. Lady Isabel probably would have found it dull and depressing.

Dr. Martin strongly urged its being changed for Boulogne. "What did it matter if Boulogne were crowded and vulgar?" he asked : "there would be the more amusement for Lady Isabel. He had had his doubts of Trouville before, as regarded its dullness : by all means let her go to Boulogne and join Mrs. Ducie."

Mr. Carlyle yielded the point, and ended by approving it ; and Lady Isabel, finding she had no chance against them all, consented to go, and plans were hastily decided upon.

She certainly looked very ill : her features were white and attenuated, her sweet, sad eyes had grown larger and darker ; her hands were hot and sickly. Though warm weather, she had generally a shawl folded round her, and would sit for hours without rousing herself, as those suffering from great weakness like to do ; would sit gazing out on the calm landscape, or watching her children at play. She went out once a day in the close carriage, and that was all : no other exertion could she be aroused to make.

In this illness the old trouble had returned—the sore feeling touching her husband and Barbara Hare. It had lain pretty dormant in the last few years, nothing having occurred to excite it ; but Lady Isabel was in that state of weakness, where grievances, let them be old or new, grow upon the mind. Her thoughts would wander to the unsatisfactory question of whether Mr. Carlyle had ever truly loved her ; or whether, lured by her rank and her beauty, he had married her, loving Barbara. Mr. Carlyle's demonstrative affection, shown so greatly for her in the first twelve months or so of their married life, had subsided into calmness. Is not a similar result arrived at by every husband that the Church ever made one with woman? It was not that his love had faded, but that time and custom had wrought their natural effects. Look at children with their toys ; a boy with a new drum, a girl with a new doll. Are not the playthings kissed, and hugged, and clasped in arms, and never put down? Did ever playthings seem like them? Are not all other things neglected, while the new toy is all in all? But, wait a little time, and the drum is consigned to some dark closet ; the doll to its cradle ; and neither of them is visited or looked at. Tell the children to go and find their lately cherished playthings, to make them their evening's amusement ; and they will go unwillingly, for they are tired of them. It is of no use scolding the children for being fickle : it is in their nature

to be sickle, for they are human. Are grown children otherwisc? Do we not all, men and women, become indifferent to our toys which we hold them securely in possession? Young lady, when he, who is soon to be your lord and master, protests to you that he shall always be as ardent a lover as he is now, believe him if you like, but don't reproach him when disappointment comes. He does not wilfully deceive you; he only forgets that it is in the constitution of man to change, the very essence of his nature. The time will arrive when his manner must settle down into a calmness, which to you, if you are of an exacting temperament, may look like indifference or coldness; but you will do well to put up with it, for it will never now be otherwise. Never: the heyday of early love, of youth, and of novelty is past.

Lady Isabel did not understand the even manner, the quiet calmness into which her husband's once-passionate love had subsided, and in her fanciful jealousy she attributed it to the influence Barbara held upon his memory. She looked for the little tender episodes of daily life: she would fain have had him hang over her chair as she sang, and draw her face to his, and feel his kisses on her lips, as when she first came, a wife, to East Lynne. It has been seen that Lady Isabel did not love Mr. Carlyle; but his tenderness, his anxious care for her in their early married days, caused her to lift up her heart to him with gratitude, and to try earnestly to love him. But—to try to love! Vain effort! Love never yet came for *trying*: it is a capricious passion, and generally comes without the knowledge and against the will. It is possible that she thought she had succeeded, for her whole esteem, her respect, and her admiration were his. When she compared him with other men, and saw how far he surpassed them, how noble and how good he was, how little the rest looked beside him, her heart rose up with pride at the consciousness of being his wife: a princess might have deemed it an honour to be the chosen of such a man as Archibald Carlyle. Spare one single corner of *his* heart to Barbara Hare! No, indeed; Isabel could not afford that.

On the day that the journey was finally decided upon, Lady Isabel was in the drawing-room with her three children; even the little fellow was sitting on the carpet. Isabel was a delicate, pretty child in her fifth year. William was the very image of his mother, Archibald was like Mr. Carlyle.

"Come hither, my darlings," she cried.

Isabel and William ran to her, and she placed an arm round each. Master Archie was kicking his heels on the carpet at a distance. They looked up at their mother.

"Would my little dears like to go a great way with mamma? Over the sea in a boat?"

Isabel—who had inherited the refined, sensitive feelings of her mother—replied only by a smile and vivid blush. William clapped his hands. "Oh yes, in a boat! Aity too, mamma?"

"Archie and all," answered Lady Isabel. "And Joyce, and Wilson, and—"

Miss Carlyle, who was seated near one of the windows, sewing, turned sharply round to interrupt the gladness. Miss Carlyle, though not openly dissenting, did not inwardly approve of the proposed emi-

gration. What did people want with change of air? thought she. She had never wanted any. A pack of new-fangled notions that doctors had got into, recommending change of air for everything! They would order it, next, for a cut finger! If Lady Isabel would make an effort, she'd get strong fast enough at home.

"The children are not going to the seaside," said she. "They are not ordered there."

"But they must go with me," replied Lady Isabel. "Of course they are not expressly ordered to it. Why should they not go?"

"Why should they not?" retorted Miss Corny. "Why, on account of the expense, to be sure. I can tell you what it is, Lady Isabel, what with one expense and another, your husband will soon be on the road to ruin. Your journey with Joyce and Peter will cost enough, ma'am, without taking a van-load of nurses and children."

Lady Isabel's heart sank within her.

"Besides, your object in going is to recover health, and how can you do that, if you are to be worried with the children?" pursued Miss Corny. "People who go abroad for pleasure, or invalids in search of health, won't find much of either if they carry their cares with them."

Lady Isabel rose, and, with difficulty, lifted Archibald from the carpet; sat down with him on her knee, and pressed his little face to hers.

"Would my baby like mamma to go away and leave him?" she asked, the tears falling fast on her fair curls. "Oh! I could not leave them behind me!" she added, looking imploringly at Miss Carlyle. "I should grow no better if you send me there alone; I should ever be yearning for my children."

"Alone, Lady Isabel! Is your husband nothing?"

"But he will only take me, he will not remain."

"Well, you can't expect his business to go to rack and ruin," snapped Miss Corny. "How can he stay away from it? With all these heavy expenses upon him, there's more need than ever for his sticking to it closely. And, before the children are gallivanting over the water, it might be as well to sit down and calculate the cost. Of course, Lady Isabel, I only offer my opinion; you are Archibald's wife, and sole mistress, and will do as you please."

Do as she pleased! Poor Lady Isabel laid her head meekly down upon her children, effectually silenced, and her heart breaking with pain. Joyce, who was then in the room, heard a little, and conjectured much of what had passed.

In the evening Mr. Carlyle carried little Isabel up to the nursery on his shoulder. Joyce happened to be there, and thought it a good opportunity to speak.

"My lady wishes to take the children with her to France, sir."

"Does she?" replied Mr. Carlyle.

"And I fear she will make herself very unhappy if they do not go, sir."

"Why should they not go?" asked Mr. Carlyle.

He went back to the drawing-room, where his wife was alone. "Isabel, do you wish to take the children with you?"

"Oh, I did so wish it!" she replied, the hectic of hope lighting her pale cheeks. "If they might only go, Archibald?"

"Of course they may go. It will be a change for them, as well as for you. Why should you hesitate?"

"The expense," she timidly whispered, the hectic growing deeper.

He looked into her eyes with his pleasant smile. "Expense is no concern of yours, Isabel: it is mine. Never let the word expense trouble you, until I tell you that it must do so."

"It will not increase the cost so very much," she returned, her eyes smiling with happiness. "And I shall get well all the sooner for having them with me."

"And, to further that, you should take them, if it were to the end of the world. Why should you study aught but your own wishes and comfort?"

She took his hand in her love and gratitude—for every tone of his voice spoke of care and tenderness for her; all jealous fancies were forgotten, all recollection, in that moment, that his manner was calmer than of old. "Archibald! I do believe you care for me as much as you ever did?"

He did not understand the words, but he held her to him as in days gone by, and kissed her tenderly. "More precious, far more precious to me than of yore, Isabel!"

Miss Carlyle flew out when she heard the decision, and frightened her brother to repentance, assuring him that his sending the children was the certain way to preclude all chance of his wife's recovery. Mr. Carlyle was sorely puzzled between Isabel's wishes and Isabel's welfare: he would promote both if he could, but if they clashed—? He feared his own judgment, he feared his wife's; and he appealed to the medical men. But Miss Corny had forestalled him there: she had contrived so to impress those gentlemen with the incessant worry the children would prove to Lady Isabel, that they pronounced their veto, and forbade the children's going. So, after all, Lady Isabel had to resign herself to the disappointment.

"Joyce," said she to her waiting-maid, "I shall leave you at home; I must take Wilson instead."

"Oh, my lady! what have I done?"

"You have done all that you ought, Joyce, but you must stay with the children. If I may not take them, the next best thing will be to leave them with you. I shall give them into your charge, not into Miss Carlyle's," she said, sinking her voice. "If Wilson remained, I could not do that."

"My lady, I must do whatever you think best. I wish I could attend you and stay wth them, but of course I cannot do both."

"I am sent away to recover health and strength, but it may be I shall die, Joyce. If I never return, will you promise to remain with my children?"

Joyce felt a creeping sensation in her veins: sobs rose in her throat, but she swallowed them down, and constrained her voice to calmness. "My lady, I hope you will come back to us as well as you used to be. I trust you will hope so too, my lady, and not give way to low spirits."

"I sincerely hope and trust I shall," answered Lady Isabel, fervently. "Still, there is no knowing, for I am very ill. Joyce, give me your promise in case of the worst, that you will remain with the children."

"I will, my lady—as long as I am permitted."

"And be kind to them, and love them, and shield them from—from any unkindness that may be put upon them," she added, her head full of Miss Carlyle. "And talk to them sometimes of their poor mother who is gone."

"I will, I will : oh, my lady, I will!" And Joyce sat down in the rocking-chair as Lady Isabel quitted her, and burst into tears.

CHAPTER II.

FRANCIS LEVISON.

MR. CARLYLE and Lady Isabel, with Wilson and Peter in attendance, arrived at Boulogne, and proceeded to the Hôtel des Bains. It may be as well to mention that Peter had been transferred from Miss Carlyle's service to theirs, when the establishment was first formed at East Lynne. Upon entering the hotel, they inquired for Mrs. Ducie, and then a disappointment awaited them. A letter was handed to them, which had arrived that morning from Mrs. Ducie, expressing her regret that certain family arrangements prevented her visiting Boulogne ; she was proceeding to some of the baths in Germany instead.

"I might almost have known it," remarked Isabel. "She was always the most changeable of women."

Mr. Carlyle proposed that they should, after all, go on to Trouville, but Isabel said now that she had come to Boulogne, she would stay there. He went out in search of lodgings, Isabel objecting to remain in the bustling hotel. He succeeded in finding some excellent ones in the Rue de l'Ecu, near the port, and they moved into them. He thought the journey had done her good, for she looked better, and said she already felt stronger. Mr. Carlyle remained with her three days ; he had promised only one, but he was pleased with Isabel's returning glimpses of health, and amused with the scenes of the busy town.

"I shall make no acquaintances here," Isabel observed to him, as they sat together at the end of the first division of the pier, which she had reached without much fatigue, and watched the gay idlers flocking past them.

"It would not be wise to do so indiscriminately," he replied, "but you may chance to find some you know. All sorts of people come over here : some respectable, and from respectable motives ; others the contrary. Some of these men, going by now, are here because they have kites flying in England."

"Kites!" echoed Lady Isabel.

"Kites, and bills, and ghosts of renewed acceptances," returned Mr. Carlyle. "And well for them if they are over here for nothing else. The worse a man's conduct has been at home, the more assurance he puts on abroad, and is the first to rush and proclaim his arrival at the consulate. To hear these men boast, we might think they were millionaires in England, and had led the lives of saints."

" You have never stayed in those continental towns, Archibald : how do you know this ? "

" I have had plenty to do with those who have stayed in them. There goes Buxton ! " he suddenly exclaimed ; " he sees me, too. Look at him, Isabel. He does not know whether to come on, or to turn and make a run for it."

" Who ? Which ? " cried Isabel, confused by the many passers by.

" That stout, well-dressed man, with the light hair, and a bunch of seals hanging to his watch-chain." He thinks better of it, and comes on. All safe, my good sir, on Boulogne pier, but if they catch you on the other side the water—. Here comes his wife, following with some ladies. Look at her satins, and her chains, and her bracelets—all swindled out of credulous tradespeople. There's not a doubt they are playing at being grand people in the English society here. It must be as good as a comedy to be behind the scenes in this Anglo-French town, and watch the airs and graces of some of its sojourners. Are you tired, Isabel ? "

" A little. I should like to return."

Mr. Carlyle rose, and giving his arm to his wife, they walked slowly down the pier. Many an eye was turned to look at them ; at his tall, noble form ; at her young beauty ; at the unmistakable air of distinction which enshrined both. They were not like the ordinary visitors at Boulogne-sur-Mer.

The tide served at eight o'clock the following morning, and Mr. Carlyle left by the Folkestone boat. Wilson made his breakfast, and after swallowing it in haste, he returned to his wife's room to say farewell.

" Good-bye, my love," he said, stooping to kiss her. " Take care of yourself."

" Give my dear love to the darlings, Archibald. And—and—"

" And what ? " he asked. " I have not a moment to lose."

" Do not get making love to Barbara Hare while I am away."

She spoke in a tone half jest, half serious—could he but have seen how her heart was beating ! Mr. Carlyle took it wholly as a jest, and went away laughing. Had he believed she was serious, he could have been little more surprised had she charged him not to go about the country on a dromedary.

Isabel rose later, and lingered listlessly over her breakfast. She was wondering how she could pass away the next few weeks : what she should do with her time. She had taken two sea-baths since her arrival, but they had appeared not to agree with her, leaving her low and shivering afterwards, so that it was not thought advisable to attempt any more. It was a lovely morning, and she determined to venture on to the pier, where they had been the previous evening. She had not Mr. Carlyle's arm, but it was not far, and she could take a long rest at the end of it.

She went, attended by Peter, took her seat, and told him to come for her in an hour. She watched the strollers on the pier ; not in crowds now, but stragglers, sauntering on at intervals. There came a gouty man, in a list shoe ; there came three young ladies and their governess ; there came two fast puppies in shooting-jackets and eye-

glasses, which they turned with a fixed stare on Lady Isabel ; but there was something about her which caused them to drop their glasses and their ill manners together. After the interval, there appeared another ; a tall, handsome, gentlemanly man. Her eyes fell upon him ; and—what was it that caused every nerve in her frame to vibrate, every pulse to quicken ? *Whose form was it that was thus advancing, and changing the monotony of her mind into tumult ? It was that of one who, she was soon to find, had never been entirely forgotten.*

Captain Levison came slowly on, approaching the part of the pier where she sat. He glanced at her, not with the hardness displayed by the two young men, but with quite sufficiently evident admiration.

"What a lovely girl !" thought he to himself. "Who can she be, sitting there alone ?" All at once a recollection flashed into his mind : he raised his hat and extended his hand, his fascinating smile in full play.

"I certainly cannot be mistaken. Have I not the honour of once more meeting Lady Isabel Vane ?"

She allowed him to take her hand, answering a few words at random, for her wits seemed to have gone wool-gathering.

"I beg your pardon—I should have said Lady Isabel Carlyle. Time has elapsed since we parted, and in the pleasure of seeing you again so unexpectedly, I thought of you as you were then."

She sat down again, the brilliant flush of emotion dying away on her cheeks. It was the loveliest face Francis Levison had seen since he had last seen hers, and he thought so as he gazed at it.

"What can have brought you to this place ?" he inquired, taking a seat by her.

"I have been ill, she explained, "and am ordered to the seaside. We should not have come here but for Mrs. DUCIE ; we expected to meet her. Mr. Carlyle only left me this morning."

"Mrs. DUCIE is off to EMS. I see them occasionally. They have been fixtures in PARIS for some time. You do indeed look ill !" he abruptly added, in a tone of sympathy ; "alarmingly ill. Is there anything I can do for you ?"

She was aware that she looked unusually ill at that moment, for the agitation and surprise of meeting him were fading away, leaving her face of an ashy whiteness. She was exceedingly vexed and angry with herself, that meeting him should have had power to call forth emotion. Until that moment she was unconscious that she retained any sort of feeling for Captain Levison.

"Perhaps I have ventured out too early," she said, in a tone that would seem to apologize for her looks ; "I think I will return. I shall meet my servant, no doubt. Good morning, Captain Levison."

"But indeed you do not appear fit to walk alone," he remonstrated. "You must allow me to see you safely home."

Drawing her hand within his arm quite as a matter of course, as he had done many a time in the days gone by, he proceeded to assist her down the pier. Lady Isabel, conscious of her own feelings, felt that it was not quite the thing to walk thus familiarly with him, but he was a sort of relative of the family—a connection at any rate, and she could find no ready excuse for declining.

"Have you seen Lady Mount Severn lately?" he inquired.

"I saw her when I was in London this spring with Mr. Carlyle. The first time we have met since my marriage: we do not correspond. Lord Mount Severn has paid us some visits at East Lynne. They are in town yet, I believe."

"For all I know. I have not seen them, or England either, for ten months. I have been staying in Paris, and got here yesterday."

"A long leave of absence," she observed.

"Oh, I have left the army. I sold out. The truth is, Lady Isabel—for I don't mind telling you—things are rather down with me at present. My old uncle has behaved shamefully: he has married again."

"I heard that Sir Peter had married."

"He is seventy-three—the old simpleton! Of course this materially alters my prospects, for it is just possible he may have a son of his own now; and my creditors all came down upon me. They allowed me to run into debt with complacency when I was heir to the title and estates, but as soon as Sir Peter's marriage appeared in the papers, myself and my consequence dropped a hundred per cent.; credit was stopped, and I was dunned for payment. So I sold out and came abroad."

"Leaving your creditors behind you?"

"What else could I do? My uncle would not pay them, or increase my allowance."

"What are your prospects, then?" resumed Lady Isabel.

"Prospects? Do you see that little ragged boy, throwing stones into the harbour?—it is well if the police don't drop upon him. Ask him what his prospects are, and he would stare in your face, and say, 'None.' Mine are on a par with his."

"You may succeed Sir Peter yet."

"I may: but I may not. When these old idiots marry a young wife—"

"Have you quarrelled with Sir Peter?" interrupted Lady Isabel.

"I should quarrel with him, as he deserves, if it would do any good: but I might get my allowance stopped. Self-interest, you see, Lady Isabel, is the order of the day with most of us."

"Do you purpose staying long in Boulogne?"

"I don't know. As I may find amusement. Paris is a fast capital, with its heated rooms and its late hours, and I came down for the refreshment of a few sea-dips. Am I walking too fast for you?"

"You increased your pace alarmingly when you spoke of Sir Peter's marriage. And I am not sorry for it," she added, good-naturedly, "for it has proved to me how strong I am growing. A week ago I could not have walked so fast."

He interrupted with eager apologies, and soon they reached her home. Captain Levison entered with her—uninvited. He probably considered that between connections great ceremony might be dispensed with, and he sat a quarter of an hour, chatting to amuse her. When he rose, he inquired what she meant to do with herself in the afternoon.

"To lie down," replied Lady Isabel. "I am not strong enough to sit up all day."

"Should you be going out again afterwards, you must allow me to take care of you," he observed. "I am glad that I happen to be here, for I am sure you ought not to wander out only followed by a servant. When Mr. Carlyle comes, he will thank me for my pains."

What was she to urge in objection? Simply nothing. He spoke, let us not doubt, from a genuine wish to serve her, in a plain, easy tone, as any acquaintance might speak. Lady Isabel schooled herself severely; if those old feelings were not quite dead within her, why, she must smother them down again as effectually as if they were; the very fact of recognizing them to her own heart, brought its glow of shame to her brow. She would meet Captain Levison and suffer his companionship as she would that of the most indifferent stranger.

It was just the wrong way for her to go to work.

As the days passed on, Lady Isabel improved wonderfully. She was soon able to go to the sands in a morning and sit there to enjoy the sea-air, watching the waves come up or recede with the tide. She made no acquaintances whatever in the place, and when she had a companion it was Captain Levison. He would frequently join her there, sometimes take her, almost always give her his arm home. She disliked having to take his arm: her conscience whispered it might be better if she did not do so. One day she said, in a joking sort of manner—she would not say it in any other—that now she was strong she had no need of his arm and his escort. He demanded, in evident astonishment, what had arisen that he might not still afford it, as her husband was not with her to give her his. She had no answer to give to this, no excuse to urge, and, in default, took his arm as usual. In the evening, he was always ready to take her to the pier, but they sat apart, mixing not with the bustling crowd, he lending to his manner, as he conversed with her, all that it could call up of fascination—and fascination, such as Francis Levison's, might be dangerous to any ear in the sweet evening twilight. The walk over, he left her at her own door. In the evening she never asked him in, and he did not intrude without permission, as he sometimes would in a morning.

Now, where was the help for this? You may say that she should have remained indoors, and not have subjected herself to his companionship. But remaining indoors would not have brought her health, and it was health that she was staying in Boulogne to acquire, and the sooner it came the better pleased she would be, for she wanted to be at home with her husband and children.

In a fortnight from the period of his departure, Mr. Carlyle was expected in Boulogne. But what a marvellous change had this fortnight wrought in Lady Isabel! She did not dare to analyze her feelings, but she was conscious that all the fresh emotions of her youth had come again. The blue sky seemed of the clearest sapphire, the fields and the waving trees were emerald, the perfume of the flowers was more fragrant than any perfume had yet seemed. She knew that all these things were only as they had ever been; and she knew that the change, the sensation of ecstasy, was in her own heart. No wonder that she shrank from self-examination.

The change from listless langour to her present feelings brought the hue and contour of health to her face far sooner than anything

else could have done. She went down with Captain Levison to meet Mr. Carlyle the evening he came in, and when Mr. Carlyle saw her behind the sofa, as he was going to the custom-house, he scarcely knew her. Her features had lost their sharpness, her cheeks wore a rosy flush, and the light of pleasure at meeting him again shone in her eyes.

"What can you have been doing to yourself, my darling?" he uttered in delight, as he emerged from the custom-house and took her hands in his. "You look almost well."

"Yes, I am much better, Archibald, but I am warm now and flushed. We have waited here some time; and the setting sun was full upon us. How long the boat was coming in."

"The wind was dead against us," replied Mr. Carlyle, wondering who the exquisite was, at his wife's side. He thought he remembered his face.

"Captain Levison," said Lady Isabel. "I wrote you word in one of my letters that he was here. Have you forgotten it?" Yes, it had slipped from his memory.

"And I am pleased that it happened to be so," said that gentleman, interposing, "for it has enabled me to attend Lady Isabel in some of her walks. She is stronger now, but at first she was unfit to venture out alone."

"I feel much indebted to you," said Mr. Carlyle, warmly.

Lady Isabel had taken her husband's arm, and Francis Levison walked by the side of Mr. Carlyle. "To tell you the truth," he said, dropping his voice so that it reached only Mr. Carlyle's ear, "when I met Lady Isabel, I was shocked to see her. I thought her days were numbered; that a very short period must close them. I therefore considered it a bounden duty to render her any slight service that might be in my power."

"I am sure she has been obliged for your attention," responded Mr. Carlyle. "And as to her visible improvement, it seems little short of a miracle. I expected, from Lady Isabel's letters to me, to find her better, but she is more than better; she looks well. Do you hear, Isabel? I say a miracle must have been wrought, to bring back your bloom, for a fortnight's space of time could scarcely have done it. This must be a famous air for invalids."

The bloom that Mr. Carlyle spoke of deepened to a glowing crimson as she listened. She knew—and she could not stifle the knowledge, however she might wish to do so—that it was not the place or the sea-air which had renovated her heart and her countenance. But she clasped her husband's arm the closer, and inwardly prayed for strength and power to thrust away from her this dangerous foe, that was creeping on in guise so insidious.

"You have not said a word to me about the children," exclaimed Lady Isabel, as she and her husband entered their rooms, Francis Levison not having been invited to enter. "Did they all send me some kisses? Did Archie send me any?"

Mr. Carlyle laughed: he was not a mother, he was only a father. Archie, with his year of age, send kisses!

"Had you been away, as I am, he should have sent some to you,"

murmured Lady Isabel. "I would have taken a thousand from him, and told him they were for papa."

"I will take a thousand back to him," answered Mr. Carlyle, holding his wife to his heart. "My dearest, the sight of you has made me glad."

The following day was Sunday, and Francis Levison was asked to dine with them: the first meal he had been invited to in the house. After dinner, when Lady Isabel left them, he grew confidential with Mr. Carlyle; laying open all his intricate affairs and his cargo of troubles.

"This compulsory exile abroad is becoming intolerable," he concluded; "and a Paris life plays the very deuce with one. Do you see any chance of my getting back to England?"

"Not the least," was the candid answer; "unless you can manage to satisfy, or partially satisfy, these claims you have been telling me of. Will not Sir Peter assist you?"

"I believe he would were the case fairly represented to him; but how am I to get over to do it? I have written several letters to him lately, and for some time I had no reply. Then came an epistle from Lady Levison; not short and sweet, but short and sour. It was to the effect that Sir Peter was ill, and could not at present be troubled with business matters."

"He cannot be very ill," remarked Mr. Carlyle. "He passed through West Lynne in his open carriage a week ago."

"He ought to help me," grumbled Captain Levison. "I am his heir, so long as Lady Levison does not give him one. I do not hear that she has expectations."

"You should contrive to see him."

"I know I should: but it is not possible, under present circumstances. With these thunder-clouds hanging over me, I dare not set foot in England, and run the risk of being dropped upon. I can stand a few things, but I shudder at the bare idea of a prison. Something peculiar in my idiosyncrasy I take it, for those who have tried it say that it's nothing when you're used to it."

"Some one might see him for you."

"Some one!—who? I have quarrelled with my lawyers, Sharp and Steel, of Lincoln's Inn."

"Keen practitioners," put in Mr. Carlyle.

"Too keen for me. I'd send them over the herring-bone if I could. They have used me shamefully since my uncle's marriage. If ever I do come into the Levison estates, they'll be ready to eat their ears off. They would like a finger in the pie with such a property as that."

"Shall I see Sir Peter Levison for you?"

"Will you?" returned Captain Levison, his dark eyes lighting up.

"If you like; as your friend, you understand; not as your solicitor? that I should decline. I have a slight knowledge of Sir Peter; my father was well acquainted with him: and if I can render you any little service, I shall be happy to do so, in return for your attention to my wife. I cannot promise to see him for these two or three weeks," resumed Mr. Carlyle, "for we are terribly busy. Otherwise I should be staying here with my wife."

Francis Levison expressed his gratitude, and the prospect, however remote, of being enabled to return to England, increased his spirits to exultation. Whilst they continued to converse, Lady Isabel sat at the window in the adjoining room, listlessly looking out on the French, who were crowding to and from the port in their Sunday attire : looking at them with her eyes, not with her senses ; her senses were holding communion with herself, and it was not altogether satisfactory. She was aware that a sensation all too warm, a feeling of attraction towards Francis Levison, was working within her ; not a voluntary one ; she could no more repress it than she could repress her own sense of being ; and, mixed with it was the stern voice of conscience, overwhelming her with the most lively terror. She would have given all she possessed to be able to overcome it ; she would have given half the years of her future life to separate herself at once and for ever from the man.

But, do not mistake the word terror ; or suppose that Lady Isabel Carlyle applied it here in the vulgar acceptation of the term. She did not fear for herself ; none could be more securely conscious of their own rectitude of principle and conduct : and she would have believed it as impossible for her ever to forsake her duty as a wife, a gentlewoman, and a Christian, as for the sun to turn from the west to the east. That was not the fear which possessed her ; it had never presented itself to her mind. What she did fear was, that further companionship, especially lonely companionship, with Francis Levison might increase the sentiments she entertained for him to a height, that her life, for perhaps years to come, would be one of unhappiness and concealment. More than all, she shrank from the consciousness of the bitter wrong that these sentiments cast upon her husband.

"Archibald, I have a favour to ask you," she timidly began, as they sat together after Captain Levison's departure. "You must promise to grant it me."

"What is it?"

"But that is not promising."

"I will grant it, Isabel ; if it be in my power."

"I want you to remain with me for the rest of the time that I must stay here."

Mr. Carlyle looked at her in surprise. "My dear, how could you think of wishing anything so unlikely? It is circuit time."

"Oh, Archibald, you must remain."

"I wish I could : but it is impossible ; you must know it to be so, Isabel. A few weeks later in the year, and I could have stayed the whole time with you. As it is I did not know how to get away for those two or three days."

"And you go back to morrow?"

"Necessity has no law, my darling."

"Then take me with you."

Mr. Carlyle smiled. "No, Isabel : not while I find the change is doing you so much good. I took these rooms for six weeks ; you must remain certainly until the end of the term, if not longer."

The colour came flowing painfully into her cheek. "I cannot stay without you, Archibald."

"Tell me why," smiled Mr. Carlyle.
"Tell him why! "I am so dull without you," was the best argument she could offer; but her voice faltered, for she felt that it would not be listened to.

Neither was it. Mr. Carlyle left the following day, and when he was departing, commended his wife to the further attention of Captain Levison. Not the faintest suspicion that it might be unwise to do so ever crossed his mind. How should it? Perfectly correct and honourable himself, it never occurred to him that Captain Levison might be less so. And as to his wife—he would fearlessly have left her alone with him, or with any one else, on a desert island, so entire was his confidence in her.

CHAPTER III.

QUITTING THE DANGER.

LADY ISABEL was seated on one of the benches of the Petit Camp, as it is called, under the ramparts of the upper town. A week or ten days had passed away since the departure of Mr. Carlyle, and in her health there was a further visible improvement. In her strength, the change was almost beyond credence. She had walked from her home to the cemetery, had lingered there, reading the inscriptions on the English graves, and now on her departure sat down to rest; tired, it must be owned, but not much more so than many a lady would be, rejoicing in rude health. Captain Levison was her companion, as he usually was in her walks; shake him off she could not. She had attempted a few stratagems; going out at unusual hours, or choosing unfrequented routes; but he was sure to trace her steps and come upon her. Isabel thought he must watch her; probably he did so. She would not take more decided steps, or say to him, you shall not join me; he might have asked for an explanation, and Isabel, in her conscious state of feeling, avoided that above all things. It will be only for a little time, she reflected; I shall soon be gone, and leave him, I hope, for ever. But meanwhile, she felt that this prolonged intercourse with him was bearing fruit; that her cheek blushed at his approach, her heart beat with something too like rapture. She tried to suppress it. Why did she not try to arrest the breeze as it filled the sails of the passing vessels? It would not have been a more hopeless task.

It was a still evening, cool for July. No sound was heard save the hum of the summer insects, and Lady Isabel sat in silence with her companion, her rebellious heart beating with a sense of its own happiness. But for the voice of conscience, strong within her; but for the sense of right and wrong; but for existing things; in short, but that she was a wife, she might have been content so to sit by his side for ever, never to wish to move, or to break the silence. Did he read her feelings? He told her, months afterwards, that he did so; but it might have been only a vain boast.

"Do you remember the evening, Lady Isabel, just such a one as

this, that we 'all passed at Richmond?' he suddenly asked. "Your father, Mrs. Vane, you, I, and others!"

"Yes, I remember it. We had spent a pleasant day : the two Miss Challenors were with us. You drove Mrs. Vane home, and I went with papa. You drove recklessly, I recollect; and Mrs. Vane said when we reached home that you should never drive her again."

"Which meant, not until the next time. Of all capricious, vain, exciting women, Emma Vane was the worst; and Emma Mount Severn is no improvement upon it : she's a systematic flirt, and nothing better. I drove recklessly on purpose to frighten her, and pay her off."

"What had she done to you?"

"Put me into a rage. She had saddled herself upon me when I wanted—I wished for—another to be my companion."

"Blanche Challoner."

"Blanche Challoner!" echoed Captain Levison, in a mocking tone: "what did I care for Blanche Challoner?"

Isabel remembered that he had been supposed in those days to care a great deal for Blanche Challoner—a most lovely girl of seventeen. "Mrs. Vane used to accuse you of caring too much for her," she said aloud.

"She accused me of caring for some one else more than for Blanche Challoner," he significantly returned, "and for once her jealous surmises were not misplaced. No, Lady Isabel, it was not Blanche Challoner I wished to drive home. Could you not have given a better guess than that at the time?" he added, turning to her.

There was no mistaking the tone of his voice or the glance of his eye. Lady Isabel felt a crimson flush rising, and turned her face away.

"The past is gone, and cannot be recalled," he continued, "but we both played our cards like simpletons. If ever two beings were formed to love each other, you and I were. I sometimes thought you read my feelings——"

Surprise had kept her silent, but she interrupted him now, laughingly enough.

"I must speak, Lady Isabel: a few words, and then I am silent for ever. I would have declared myself had I dared, but my uncertain position, my debts, my inability to keep a wife, weighed me down; and instead of appealing to Sir Peter, as I hoped to do, for the means to assume a position that would justify me in asking for Lord Mount Severn's daughter, I crushed my hopes within me, and suffered you to escape——"

"I will not hear this, Captain Levison," she cried, rising from her seat in anger.

He touched her arm to place her on it again. "One single moment yet, I pray you. I have for years wished that you should know why I lost you; a loss that tells upon me yet. I have bitterly worked out my own folly since. I knew not how passionately I loved you, until you became the wife of another. Isabel, I love you passionately still."

"How dare you presume so to address me?"

She spoke in a cold dignified tone of hauteur, as it was her bounden duty to speak. But nevertheless she was conscious of an under-

current of feeling, whispering that under other auspices the avowal would have brought to her heart the most intense bliss.

"What I have said can do no harm now," responded Captain Levison; "the time has gone by for it; for whether you nor I are likely to forget that you are a wife. We have each chosen our path in life, and must abide by it; the gulf between us is impassable; but the fault was mine. I ought to have avowed my affection, and not have suffered you to throw yourself away upon Mr. Carlyle."

"Throw myself away!" she indignantly uttered, roused to the resort. "Mr. Carlyle is my dear husband; esteemed, respected, beloved. I married him of my own free choice, and I have never repented it. I have grown more attached to him day by day. Look at his noble nature, his noble form: what are *you* by his side? You forget yourself, Francis Levison."

He bit his lips. "No, I do not."

"You are talking to me as you have no right to talk," she exclaimed in her agitation. "Who, but you, would so insult me, or take advantage of my momentarily unprotected condition? Would you dare to do it, were Mr. Carlyle within reach? I wish you good evening, sir."

She walked away as quickly as her tired frame would permit. Captain Levison strode after her. He took forcible possession of her hand, and placed it within his arm.

"I pray you forgive and forget what has escaped me, Lady Isabel. Suffer me to be as before, the kind friend, the anxious brother, endeavouring to be of service to you in the absence of Mr. Carlyle."

"It is what I have suffered you to be, looking upon you as—I may say—a relative," she coldly rejoined, withdrawing her hand from his contact. "Not else should I have permitted your incessant companionship: and this is how you have repaid it! My husband thanked you for your attention to me; could he have read what was in your false heart, he had offered you a different sort of thanks, I fancy."

"I ask you for pardon, Lady Isabel; I have acknowledged my fault; and I can do no more. I will not so offend again; but there are moments when our dearest feelings break through the rules of life, and betray themselves, in spite of our sober judgment. Suffer me to support you down this steep hill," he added, for they were then going over the sharp stones of the Grand' Rue; "you are not strong enough to proceed alone, after this evening's long walk."

"You should have thought of that before," she said, some sarcasm in her tone. "No. I have declined."

So he had to put his arm back, which he was holding out, and she walked on unsupported, with what strength she had, he continuing to walk by her side. Arrived at her own door, she wished him a cold good evening, and he turned away in the direction of his hotel.

Lady Isabel brushed past Peter, and flew upstairs, startling Wilson, who had taken possession of the drawing-room to air her smart cap at its windows in the absence of Her lady.

"My desk, Wilson, immediately," cried she, tearing off her gloves, her bonnet, and her shawl. "Tell Peter to be in readiness to take a letter to the post; and he must walk fast, or he will not catch it before the English mail is closed."

The symptoms of sinful happiness throbbing at her heart, while Francis Levison told her of his love, spoke plainly to Lady Isabel of the expediency of withdrawing entirely from his society and his dangerous sophistries. She would go away from the very place that contained him ; put the sea between them. So she dashed off a letter to her husband ; an urgent summons that he should come for her without delay, for, remain away longer, she *would not*. It is probable that she would have started alone, without waiting for Mr. Carlyle, but for the fear of not having sufficient funds for the journey, after the rent and other things were paid.

Mr. Carlyle, when he received the letter and marked its earnest tone, wondered much. In reply, he stated he would be with her on the following Saturday, and then her returning, or not, with him could be settled. Fully determined not to meet Captain Levison again, Isabel, in the intervening days, only went out in a carriage. He called once, and was shown into the drawing-room : but Lady Isabel, who happened to be in her own chamber, sent out a message, which was delivered by Peter. "My lady's compliments, but she must decline to receive visitors."

Sunday morning—it had been impossible for him to get away before—brought Mr. Carlyle. He strongly combated her wish to return home until the six weeks should have expired ; he almost said he would not take her ; and she grew earnest over it, almost to agitation.

"Isabel," he said, "let me know your motive, for it appears to me that you have one. The sojourn here is evidently doing you a great deal of good, and what you urge about 'being dull' sounds very like nonsense. Tell me what it is."

A sudden impulse flashed over her that she *would* tell him the truth. Not tell him that she loved Francis Levison, or that he had spoken to her as he did : she valued her husband too greatly to draw him into any unpleasantness of which the end could not be seen ; but own to him that she had once felt a passing fancy for Francis Levison, and preferred not to be subjected to his companionship now. Oh, that she had done so ! her kind, her noble, her judicious husband ! Why did she keep silence ? The whole truth, as to her present feelings, it was not expedient that she should tell, but she might have confided sufficient to him. He would only have cherished her the more deeply, and sheltered her under his fostering care, safe from harm.

Why did she not speak ? In the impulse of the moment she was about to do so, when Mr. Carlyle, who had been taking a letter from his pocket-book, put it into her hand. Upon such slight threads do the events of life turn ! Her thoughts diverted, she remained silent while she opened the letter. It was from Miss Carlyle, who had handed it to her brother in the moment of his departure, to carry to Lady Isabel and save postage. Mr. Carlyle had nearly dropped it into the Folkestone post-office.

A letter as stiff as Miss Corny herself. The children were well, and the house was going on well, and she hoped Lady Isabel was better. It filled three sides of note-paper, but that was all the news it contained, and it wound up with the following sentence : "I would

continue my epistle, but Barbara Hare, who is to spend the day with us, has just arrived."

Barbara Hare spending the day at East Lynne! That item was quite enough for Lady Isabel; and her heart and her confidence closed to her husband. "She must go home to her children," she urged; she could not remain longer away from them; and she urged it at length with tears.

"Nay, Isabel," said Mr. Carlyle; "if you are so much in earnest as this, you shall certainly go back with me."

Then she was as a child let loose from school. She laughed; she danced in her excess of content; she showered kisses on her husband, thanking him in her happy gratitude. Mr. Carlyle set it down to her love for him; he arrived at the conclusion that, in reiterating that she could not bear to be away from him, she spoke the fond truth.

"Isabel," he said, smiling tenderly upon her, "do you remember, in the first days of our marriage, you told me you did not love me, but that the love would come? I think this is it."

Her face flushed nearly to tears at the word; a bright, glowing, all too conscious flush. Mr. Carlyle mistook its source, and caught her to his heart.

One day more, and then they—she and that man—should be separated by the broad sea. The thought caused her to lift up her heart in thankfulness. She knew that to leave him would be as though she left the sun behind her; that the other side might for a time be somewhat dreary; nevertheless, she fervently thanked Heaven. Oh, reader! never doubt the principles of poor Lady Isabel, her rectitude of mind, her wish and endeavour to do right, her abhorrence of wrong; her spirit was earnest and true, her intentions were pure.

Captain Levison paid a visit to Mr. Carlyle, and inquired if he had had time to see Sir Peter. Not yet: Mr. Carlyle had been too busy to think of it; but he should soon have more leisure on his hands, and would not fail him. Such was the reply; the reply of an honourable man to a man of dishonour: but, of the dishonour, Mr. Carlyle suspected nothing.

It was high water in the afternoon, and the Folkestone boat was announced to start at one o'clock. The Carlysles and their servants went on board in good time, and Captain Levison greeted them and said farewell as they stepped on to the steamer. Lady Isabel took her seat on deck, her husband standing by her; the ropes were unloosened, and the boat moved slowly down the harbour. On the shore stood Francis Levison, watching its progress, watching her. He was a bold, unscrupulous man; and there was little doubt that the more refined feelings, both of the past and present, he had thought fit to avow for Lady Isabel, were all assumed to serve a purpose. However, he had received his checkmate.

As he receded from Isabel's view, a sensation of relief thrilled through her whole frame, causing it to shudder, and involuntarily she clasped the hand of Mr. Carlyle.

"You are not cold, Isabel?" he said, bending over her.

"Oh no: I am very comfortable; very happy."

"But you were surely shivering?"

"At the thought of what I shoid have done with myself, had you come away, and left me there still, all alone, Archibald," she continued in an impassioned whisper, "never let me go away from you again; keep me near you always."

He smiled as he looked down into her pleading eyes, and a whole world of tender response and love might be detected in his earnest tone. "Always and always, Isabel. It is greater pain to me than to you, to have you away from me."

How could she ever doubt him?

CHAPTER IV.

THE FRACTURED ANKLE.

LADY ISABEL had returned home to health, to the delight of meeting her children, to the glad sensation of security. But, as the days went on, a miserable feeling of apathy stole over her; a feeling as if all whom she had loved in the world had died, leaving her living and alone. It was a painful depression, this vacuum in her heart which was making itself felt in its keen intensity. She strove to drive that bad man away from her thoughts; but even while she so strove, he was again in them. Too frequently she caught herself thinking that if she could only see him once again, for ever so short a period, one hour, one day, she could compose her spirit afterwards to rest. She did not encourage these reflections: from what you know of her, you may be sure of that: but they thrust themselves continually forward. The form of Francis Levison was ever present with her; not a minute of the day but it gave the colouring to her thoughts, and at night it made the subject of her dreams. Oh, those dreams! they were painful to awake from; painful from the contrast they presented to reality; and equally painful to her conscience, in its striving after what was right. She would have given much not to have these dreams; never to see or think of him in her sleep. But, how prevent it? There was no prevention; for when the mind (or the imagination, if you prefer the word) is thoroughly imbued with a subject of this nature, especially if unhappiness tingles with it, then the dreams follow necessarily the bent of the waking thoughts. Poor Lady Isabel would awaken to self-reproach, restless and feverish; wishing that this terrible disease could be driven away, root and branch; but Time, the great healer, must, she knew, pass over her, before that could be.

Mr. Carlyle mounted his horse one morning and rode over to Levison Park. He asked for Sir Peter, but was shown into the presence of Lady Levison: a young and pretty woman, showily dressed. She inquired his business.

"My business, madam, is with Sir Peter."

"But Sir Peter is not well enough to attend to business. It upsets him; worries him."

"Nevertheless, I am here by his own appointment. He mentioned twelve o'clock; and the hour has barely struck."

Lady Levison bit her lip and bowed coldly; and at that moment a

servant appeared to conduct Mr. Carlyle to Sir Peter. The master which had taken Mr. Carlyle thinner was lowered upon immediately—Francis Levison, his debts, and his grandfather, Sir Peter, an old gentleman in a velvet skull-cap, particularly enlarged upon the latter.

"I would pay his debts to-day and set him upon his legs again, but that I know I should have to do the same thing over and over again to the end of the chapter—as I have done before," cried Sir Peter. "His grandfather was my only brother, his father my dutiful and beloved nephew; but he is just as bad as they were estimable. He is a worthless fellow, and nothing else, Mr. Carlyle."

"His tale drew forth my compassion, and I promised I would see you and speak for him," returned Mr. Carlyle. "Of Captain Levison's personal virtues or vices I know nothing."

"And the less you know of them the better," growled Sir Peter. "I suppose he wants me to clear him and start him afresh?"

"Something of the sort, I conclude."

"But how is it to be done? I am at home, and he is over there. His affairs are in a state of confusion, and no one can come to the bottom of them without an explanation from him. Certain liabilities, for which I have furnished the money, the creditors swear have not yet been liquidated. He must come over if he wants anything done."

"Where is he to come to? He must be in England *sub rosa*."

"He can't be here," hastily rejoined Sir Peter. "Lady Levison would not have him for a day."

"He might be at East Lynne," good-naturedly observed Mr. Carlyle. "No one would dream of looking for him there. I think it is a pity that you should not meet, if you do feel inclined to help him."

"You are a great deal more considerate to him than he deserves, Mr. Carlyle. May I ask if you intend to act for him in a professional capacity?"

"I do not."

A few more words, and it was decided that Captain Levison should be immediately sent for. As Mr. Carlyle left Sir Peter's presence, he encountered Lady Levison.

"I can scarcely be ignorant that your conference with my husband has reference to his grand-nephew," she observed.

"It has," replied Mr. Carlyle.

"I have a very bad opinion of him, Mr. Carlyle: at the same time I do not wish you to carry away a wrong impression of me. Francis Levison is my husband's nephew, his heir presumptive; it may therefore appear strange that I set my face so determinedly against him. Two or three years ago, before my marriage with Sir Peter, in fact before I knew Sir Peter, I was brought into contact with Francis Levison. He was acquainted with some friends of mine, and at their house I met him. He behaved shamefully ill; he repaid their hospitality with gross ingratitude! other details and facts regarding his conduct, also became known to me. Altogether, I believe him to be a base and despicable man, both by nature and by inclination, and that he will remain so to the end of time."

"I know very little indeed of him," observed Mr. Carlyle. "May I inquire the nature of his ill conduct in the instance you mention?"

"He ruined them. He ruined them, Mr. Carlyle. They were simple, unsuspicuous country people, understanding neither fraud nor vice, nor the ways of an evil world. Francis Levison persuaded them to put their names to bills, 'as a simple matter of form, to accommodate him for a month or so,' as he stated, and as they believed. They were not rich: they lived in comfort upon their own small estate, but with no superfluous money to spare, and when the time came for them to pay—as come it did—it brought them ruin, and they had to leave their home. He deliberately did it: I am certain that Francis Levison deliberately did it, knowing what would be the end. And I could tell you of other things. Sir Peter may have informed you that I object to receive him here. I do. My objection is to the man, to his character; not owing, as I hear it has been said, to any jealous or paltry feeling touching his being the heir. I must lose my own self-respect before I admit Francis Levison to my house, an inmate. Sir Peter may assist him and welcome, may pay his debts and get him out of his scrapes as often as he pleases; but I will not have him here."

"Sir Peter said you declined to receive him. But it is necessary he should come to England—if his affairs are to be set straight—and also that he should see Sir Peter."

"Come to England?" interrupted Lady Levison. "How can he come to England under present circumstances? Unless, indeed, he comes *en cache*."

"*En cache*, of course," replied Mr. Carlyle. "There is no other way. I have offered to let him stay at East Lynne. He is, you may be aware, a connection of Lady Isabel's."

"Take care that he does not repay *your* hospitality with ingratitude," warmly returned Lady Levison. "It would only be in accordance with his usual practice."

Mr. Carlyle laughed. "I do not well see what harm he could do me, allowing that he had the inclination. He would not scare my clients from me; or beat my children; and I can take care of my purse. A few days, no doubt, will be the extent of his sojourn with us."

Lady Levison smiled too, and shook hands with Mr. Carlyle. "In your house perhaps there may be no field for his vagaries; but rely upon it, where there is one, he is sure to be at some mischief or other."

This visit of Mr. Carlyle's to Levison Park took place on a Friday morning, and on his return to his office he despatched an account of it to Captain Levison at Boulogne, telling him to come over. But Mr. Carlyle, like many another man whose brain has its share of work, was sometimes forgetful of trifles, and it quite slipped his memory to mention the expected arrival at home. The following evening, Saturday, he and Lady Isabel were dining in the neighbourhood, when the conversation at table turned upon the Ducies and their embarrassments. The association of ideas led Mr. Carlyle's thoughts to Boulogne, to Captain Levison and his embarrassments, and it immediately occurred to him that he had not told his wife of the anticipated visit. He kept it in mind, and spoke as soon as they were in the chariot returning home.

"Isabel," he began, "I suppose we have always rooms ready for visitors. Because I am expecting one."

"Oh yes. Or, if not, they are soon made ready."

"Ay, but to-morrow is Sunday, and I have no doubt that is the day he will take advantage of to come. I am sorry I forgot to mention it yesterday."

"Who is coming?"

"Captain Levison."

"Who?" repeated Lady Isabel in a sharp tone of consternation.

"Captain Levison. Sir Peter consents to see him, with a view to the settlement of his liabilities, but Lady Levison declines to receive him at the park. So I offered to give him house room at East Lynne for a few days."

There is an old saying about the heart leaping into the mouth; and Lady Isabel's heart leaped into hers. She grew dizzy at the words; her senses seemed for the moment to desert her: her first sensation was as if the dull earth had opened and shown her a way to paradise; her second was a lively consciousness that Francis Levison ought not to be suffered to come again into companionship with her. Mr. Carlyle continued to converse of the man's embarrassments, of his own interview with Sir Peter, of Lady Levison; but Isabel was as one who heard not. She was debating the question, how could she prevent his coming?

"Archibald," she presently said, "I do not wish Francis Levison to stay at East Lynne."

"It will only be for a few days; perhaps only a day or two. Sir Peter is in the humour to discharge his claims; and, the moment his resolve is known, the ex-captain may walk her Majesty's dominions, an unmolested man; free to go where he will."

"That may be," interrupted Lady Isabel, in an accent of impatience, "but why should he come to our house?"

"I proposed it myself. I had no idea you would dislike his coming. Why should you?"

"I don't like Francis Levison," she murmured. "That is, I don't care to have him at East Lynne."

"My dear, I fear there is no help for it now: he is most likely on his road, and will arrive to-morrow: I cannot turn him out again, after my own voluntary invitation. Had I known it would be disagreeable to you, I should not have proposed it."

"To-morrow!" she exclaimed, the only word that caught her ear. "Is he coming to-morrow?"

"As it is Sunday, a free day, he will be sure to take advantage of it. What has he done, that you should object to his coming? You did not say in Boulogne that you disliked him."

"He has done nothing," was her faltering answer, feeling that her grounds of opposition must melt under her, one by one.

"Lady Levison appears to possess a very bad opinion of him," resumed Mr. Carlyle. "She says she knew him in years gone by. She mentioned one or two things which, if true, were bad enough: but possibly she may be prejudiced."

"She is prejudiced," said Isabel. "At least, so Francis Levison

told me in Boulogne. There appeared to be no love lost between them?"

"At any rate his ill doings or well doings cannot affect us for the short time he is likely to remain at East Lynne. You have taken a prejudice against him also, I suppose, Isabel?"

She suffered Mr. Carlyle to remain in the belief, and sat with clasped hands and a despairing spirit, feeling that Fate was against her. How could she accomplish her task of forgetting this man, if he was thus to be thrown into her home and her companionship? Suddenly she turned to her husband, and laid her cheek upon his shoulder.

He thought she was tired. He passed his arm round her waist, drew her face to a more comfortable position, and beat his own lovingly upon it. It came into her mind as she lay there, to tell him a portion of the truth, as it had done once before. It was a strong arm of shelter round her; a strong pillar of protection, he upon whom she leaned; why did she not confide herself to him as trustingly as a little child? Simply because her courage failed. Once, twice, the opening words were upon her lips, but come forth they did not; and then the carriage stopped at East Lynne, and the opportunity was over. Oh, how many a time, in after years, did Lady Isabel recall that midnight drive with her husband, and wish, in her vain repentance, that she had opened his eyes to that dangerous man!

The following morning proved a wet one, but it cleared up in the middle of the day. In the afternoon, however, whilst they were at church, rain came on again.

"Cornelia," whispered Mr. Carlyle, approaching his sister when service was over, "it is raining heavily: you had better return with us in the pony carriage. John can walk."

Not she. Had it poured cats and dogs Miss Carlyle would not have gone to or from church otherwise than on her legs, and off she started with her large umbrella. Mr. Carlyle and Isabel soon passed her, striding along the footpath, some of the servants behind her. *Not* in attendance upon Miss Carlyle: she would have scorned such attendance more than she scorned the pony carriage. No matter what might be the weather, this adventurous lady would be seen pushing through it; through the summer's heat, and the winter's snow; through the soft shower and the impetuous storm; that great umbrella (it might have covered a moderate haystack) her almost constant companion, for Miss Corny was one of those prudent spirits who like to be prepared for contingencies and to be on the safe side; those who act up to the maxim, "When it's fine take an umbrella; when it rains, do as you like." In fine weather she chose the pathway through the fields, but not in wet weather, for the damp grass did not agree with her petticoats.

Mr. Carlyle had driven through the gates and was winding up the avenue, when sounds of distress were heard, and they saw little Isabel flying towards them from the slopes, crying and sobbing in the greatest agitation. Mr. Carlyle jumped out and met the child.

"Oh, papa, papa! oh come, pray come! I think she is dead."

He took the child in his arms to soothe her. "Hush, my little darling, you will alarm mamma. Don't tremble so. Tell me what it is."

Isabel told her tale. She had been a naughty child, she freely confessed, and had run out in the rain for fun, because Joyce told her not. She had run into the wet grass at the park, down the slopes. Joyce after her. And Joyce had slipped and was lying at the foot of the slopes with a white face, never moving.

"Take care of her, Isabel," said Mr. Carlyle, placing the agitated and repentant child by his wife's side. "She says Joyce has fallen by the slopes. No, do not come: I will go first and see what has happened."

Joyce was lying just as she fell, at the foot of the slopes. But her eyes were open now, and if she had fainted—as might be inferred from the little girl's words—she had recovered consciousness.

"Oh, sir, don't try to move me! I fear my leg is broken."

He did, however, essay gently to raise her, but she screamed with pain, and he found he must wait for assistance. "I trust you are not much hurt," he kindly said. "How did it happen?"

"Miss Isabel ran out, sir, in all the rain and wet, and I went after her to bring her back again. But the slopes are slippery, and down I went, and just at first I remembered nothing more."

Mr. Carlyle despatched John and the pony-carriage back for Mr. Wainwright, and with the aid of the servants, who were soon up from church, Joyce was carried in, and laid on a bed, dressed as she was. Mr. Carlyle and Lady Isabel remained with her. Miss Carlyle also was there, fidgeting and banging about, getting things ready that she fancied might be wanted, and pressing cordials upon Joyce which the latter could not take. Miss Carlyle's frame of mind, between sympathy and anger, was rather an explosive one: altogether, she did more harm than good. Little Isabel stole in and drew her mother away from the bed.

"Mamma," she whispered, "there is a strange gentleman downstairs. He came in a chaise. He has a portmanteau, and he is asking for you and papa."

Lady Isabel turned sick with apprehension. Had he really come?

"Who is it, Isabel?" she said, by way of making some answer: she guessed only too well.

"I don't know. I don't like him, mamma. He took hold of me and held me, and there was an ugly look in his eyes."

"Go round the bed and tell your papa that a stranger is downstairs," said Lady Isabel.

"Mamma," shivered the child, before she stirred to obey, "will Joyce die?"

"No, dear; I hope not."

"Because you know it will be my fault. Oh, mamma, I am so sorry! what can I do?"

"Hush! If you sob, it will make Joyce worse. Go and whisper to papa about the gentleman."

"But will Joyce ever forgive me?"

"She has forgiven you already, I am sure, Isabel; but you must be all the more obedient to her for the future. Go to papa, my dear, as I tell you."

The stranger was of course Captain Levison. Mr. Carlyle went

down to receive and entertain him. Lady Isabel did not, the accident to her maid being put forth as an excuse.

Mr. Wainwright pronounced the injury to be a simple fracture of the ankle-bone. It might have been much worse, he observed, but Joyce would be confined to her bed for three or four weeks.

"Joyce," whispered Isabel, "I'll come and read my Bible-stories to you always; always and always; I know mamma will let me, and then you won't be dull. And there's that beautiful new book of fairy-tales with the pictures; you'll like to hear them; there's about a princess who was locked up in a castle with nothing to eat."

Joyce faintly smiled, and took the child's eager little hand in hers.

Later in the evening, Isabel and William were in the room with Mr. Carlyle. "These are fine children," observed Francis Levison. "Beautiful faces!"

"They resemble their mother much, I think," was the reply of Mr. Carlyle. "She was a very lovely child."

"Did you know Lady Isabel as a child?" inquired Francis Levison, some surprise in his tone.

"I frequently saw her. She used to stay here with Lady Mount Severn."

"Ah, by the way, this place was Mount Severn's property then. What a reckless man he was! Young lady, I must take possession of you," continued Captain Levison, extending his hand and drawing Isabel towards him. "You ran away from me when I first came, and would not tell me what your name was."

"I ran away to tell mamma that you were here. She was with Joyce."

"Joyce! Who is Joyce?"

"Lady Isabel's maid," interposed Mr. Carlyle. "The one to whom, as I told you, the accident had just happened. A particularly valued servant in our family, is Joyce."

"It is a curious name," remarked Captain Levison. "Joyce--Joyce! I never heard such a name. Is it a Christian or surname?"

"She was baptized Joyce. It is not so very uncommon. Her name is Joyce Hallijohn. She has been with us several years."

At this moment Isabel, having been trying in vain to escape from Captain Levison, burst into tears. Mr. Carlyle inquired what was amiss.

"I don't like him to hold me," was the response of Miss Isabel, ignoring ceremony.

Captain Levison laughed and held her tighter. But Mr. Carlyle rose, and with quiet authority drew away the child, and placed her on his own knee. She hid her face upon him, and put up her little hand round his neck.

"Papa, I don't like him," she whispered softly; "I am afraid of him. Don't let him take me again."

Mr. Carlyle's only answer was to press her to him. "You are not accustomed to children, Captain Levison," he observed. "They are curious-little plants to deal with, capricious and sensitive."

"They must be a great worry," was the rejoinder. "This accident to your servant must be a serious one. It will confine her to her bed for some time, I presume?"

"For weeks, the doctor says. And no possibility of her getting up from it."

Captain Levison rose, caught hold of William in apparent glee, and swung him round. Unlike his sister, the boy laughed, and seemed to enjoy the fun.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. HARE'S DREAM.

THE next day rose bright, warm, and cloudless, and the morning sun streamed into the bedroom of Mrs. Hare. That lady lay in bed, a flush on her delicate cheeks, and her soft eyes rather glistening, as if with a touch of fever. The justice, in a cotton nightcap with a tassel, sat on a chair tying his drawers at the knee, preparatory to inducting his legs into his pantaloons—if any single damsel in years, who may read this, will forgive this slight revelation as to the mysteries of a gentleman's toilette. The pantaloons assumed, and the braces fastened, the justice threw his nightcap on to the bed and went up to the wash-stand, where he splashed away for a few minutes at his face and hands: he never shaved until after breakfast. Mr. and Mrs. Hare were of the old-fashioned class who knew nothing about dressing-rooms; their bedroom was very large, and they had never used a dressing-room in their lives, or found the need of one. The justice rubbed his face to brilliancy, settled into his morning wig and his dressing-gown, and then turned to the bed.

"What will you have for breakfast?"

"Thank you, Richard, I do not think that I can eat anything. I shall be glad of my tea; I am very thirsty."

"All nonsense," responded the justice, alluding to the intimation of not eating. "I have a poached egg."

Mrs. Hare smiled at him and gently shook her head. "You are very kind, Richard, but I could not take it this morning. Barbara may send up the smallest bit of dry toast."

"My belief is, that you just *give way* to this notion of feeling ill, Anne," cried the justice. "It's half fancy, I know. If you'd get up and shake it off, and come down, you would enjoy your breakfast and be set up for the day. Whereas you lie here, taking nothing but trashy tea, and get up afterwards weak, shaky, and fit for nothing."

"It is ever so many weeks, Richard, since I lay in bed to breakfast," remonstrated poor Mrs. Hare. "I really don't think I have done so once, since—since the spring."

"And have been all the better for it."

"But indeed I am not equal to getting up this morning. Would you please throw this window open before you go down. I should like to feel the air."

"You will get the air too near from this window," replied Mr. Justice Hare, opening the further one. Had his wife requested the further one to be opened, he would have opened the other; his own will and opinions were ever paramount. Then he descended.

A minute or two, and up ran Barbara, looking bright and fair as the morning; her pink muslin dress with its ribbons and its open white lace sleeves as pretty as she was. She leaped over to kiss her mother.

Barbara had grown more gentle and tender of late years. The bitterness of her pain had passed away, leaving all that had been good in her love to mellow and fertilize her nature. Her character had been greatly improved by sorrow.

"Mamma, are you ill? And you have been so well lately: you went to bed so well last night! Papa says——"

"Barbara, dear," interrupted Mrs. Hare, glancing round the room with dread, and speaking in a deep whisper: "I have had one of those dreadful dreams again."

"Oh, mamma, how *can* you!" exclaimed Barbara, starting up in vexation. "How can you suffer a foolish dream so to overcome you as to make you ill? You have good sense in other matters; but, in this, you seem to put all sense away from you."

"Child, will you tell me how I am to help it?" returned Mrs. Hare, taking Barbara's hand and drawing her to her again. "I do not give myself these dreams; I cannot prevent their making me sick, prostrate, feverish. I was as well yesterday as I could be; I went to bed quite comfortable; in excellent spirits; I do not know that I had even once thought of poor Richard during the day. And yet the dream came. There were no circumstances to lead to or induce it, either in my thoughts or in absolute facts; but, come it did. How can I help these things, I ask?"

"And it is so long since you had one of these disagreeable dreams! Why, how long is it, mamma?"

"So long, Barbara, that the dread of them had nearly left me. I scarcely think I have had one since that stolen visit of Richard's, years ago."

"Was it a very bad dream, mamma?"

"Oh, child, yes. I dreamt that the real murderer came to West Lynne: that he was with us here, and we——"

At this moment the bedroom door was flung open, and the face of the justice, especially stern and cross, was pushed in. So startled was Mrs. Hare, that she shook until she shook the pillow, and Barbara sprang away from the bed. Surely he had not distinguished their topic of conversation!

"Are you coming to make breakfast to-day, or not, Barbara? Do you expect me to make it?"

"She is coming this instant, Richard," said Mrs. Hare, her voice more faint than usual. And the justice turned and stamped down again.

"Barbara, could your papa have heard me mention Richard?"

"No, no, mamma, impossible; the door was shut... I will bring up your breakfast myself, and then you can tell me about the dream."

Barbara flew after Mr. Hare, poured out his coffee, saw him settled at his breakfast; with a plateful of grouse-pie before him, and then returned with her mother's tea and dry toast.

"Go on with the dream, mamma," she said.

"But your own breakfast will be cold, child."

"Oh, I don't mind that. Did you dream of Richard?"

"Not very much of Richard; except that the old and continuous trouble, of his being away and unable to return, seemed to follow it all through. You remember, Barbara, Richard asserted to us, in that short, hidden night visit, that he did not commit the murder; that it was another who did so?"

"Yes, I remember," replied Barbara.

"Barbara, I am convinced he spoke truth: I trust him implicitly."

"I feel sure of it also, mamma."

"I asked him, you may remember, whether it was Otway Bethel who committed it; for I have always doubted Bethel in a vague indefinite manner: Richard replied that it was not Bethel, but a stranger. Well, Barbara, in my dream I thought that stranger came to West Lynne; that he came to this house, here, and we were talking to him of it, conversing as we might with any other visitor. Mind you, we seemed to *know* that he was the one who actually did it; but he denied it; he wanted to put it upon Richard: and I saw him—yes, I did, Barbara—whisper to Otway Bethel. But oh, I cannot tell you the sickening horror that was upon me throughout, and seemed to be upon you also, lest he should make good his own apparent innocence, and crush Richard, his victim. I think the dread and horror awoke me."

"What was this stranger like?" asked Barbara, in a low tone.

"Well, I cannot quite tell you: the recollection of his appearance seemed to pass away from me with the dream. He was dressed as a gentleman, and we conversed with him as an equal."

Barbara's mind was full of Captain Thorn; but his name had not been mentioned to Mrs. Hare, neither would she mention it now. She fell into deep thought, and Mrs. Hare had to speak twice before she could be aroused.

"Barbara, I say, don't you think that this dream, coming uncalled-for, uninduced, must forbode some ill? Rely upon it, something connected with that wretched murder is going to be stirred up again."

"You know, mamma, I do not believe in dreams," was Barbara's answer. "I think when people say, 'This dream is a sign of such and such a thing,' it is the greatest absurdity in the world. I wish you could remember what the man was like in your dream."

"I wish I could," answered Mrs. Hare, breaking off a particle of her dry toast. "All I remember is, that he appeared to be a gentleman."

"Was he tall? Had he black hair?"

Mrs. Hare shook her head. "I tell you, my dear, the remembrance has passed from me; so whether his hair was dark or light, I cannot say. I think he was tall: but he was sitting down, and Otway Bethel stood behind his chair. I seemed to feel that Richard was outside the door, in hiding, trembling lest the man should go out and see him there; and I trembled too. Oh, Barbara, it was a distressing dream!"

"I wish you could avoid having them, mamma, for they seem to upset you very much."

"Why did you ask whether the man was tall, and had black hair?"

Barbara returned an evasive answer. It would not do to tell Mrs.

Hare that her suspicions pointed to one particular quarter : it would have agitated her too greatly.

"So vivid was the dream, so like reality, that even when I awoke I could not for some minutes believe that the murderer was not actually at West Lyane," resumed Mrs. Hare. "The impression that he is here, or is coming here, is upon me still ; a sort of undercurrent of impression, you understand, Barbara : of course my own good sense tells me that there is no real foundation for supposing this to be the case. Oh, Barbara, Barbara ! " she added, in a tone of wailing, as her head drooped forward, in its pain, until it rested on her daughter's arm, "when will this unhappy state of things end ? One year glides away and another comes ; year after year, year after year the years drag on, and Richard remains an exile ! "

Barbara spoke not : what sympathy or comfort could she offer in words ? the case admitted of none : but she pressed her lips upon her mother's pale forehead.

"Child, I am growing sick, sick to hear of Richard. My heart aches for the sight of him," went on the poor lady. "Seven years next spring, since he stole here to see us. Seven years, and not a look at his beloved face, not a word of news from him to say that he is yet in life ! Was any mother ever tried as I am tried ? "

"Dear mamma, don't ! You will make yourself ill."

"I am ill already, Barbara."

"Yes ; but this grief and emotion will make you worse. People say that the seventh year always brings a change : it may bring one as regards Richard. It may bring him clearance, mamma, for all we know. Do not despair."

"Child ! I do not despair. Despondency I cannot help at times feeling, but it has not reached despair. I believe I truly believe that God will some time bring the right to light ; how can I despair, then, while I trust in Him ? "

There was a pause, which Barbara broke. "Shall I bring you up some more tea, mamma ? "

"No, my dear. *Send* me some up, for I am still thirsty ; but you must remain below and take your own breakfast. What may your papa not be suspecting, if you do not ? Guard your very countenance. I always dread lest, if we appear sad, he should suppose we are thinking of Richard."

"And what if he did, mamma ? Surely thoughts are free."

"Hush, Barbara ! hush !" repeated Mrs. Hare, in a whispered tone of warning. "You know the oath he has taken to bring Richard to justice ; you know how determined he is ; and you know that he fully believes Richard to be guilty. If he found we dwelt upon his innocence, he might be capable of scouring the whole land from one end of it to the other in search of him, to deliver him up to trial. Your papa is so very—"

"Pig-headed," put in Barbara, saucily, though it was not precisely a young lady's word, and her cherry lips pouted after uttering it.

"Barbara !" remonstrated Mrs. Hare. "I was going to say so very just."

"Then I say he would be cruel and unnatural, rather than just, if he

were to search the country that he might deliver up his own son to death," returned Barbara, boldly, but with wet eyelashes. Very carefully did she dry them before entering the breakfast-room.

The dinner-hour of the Hares, when they were alone, was four o'clock, and it arrived that day as usual; and they sat down to table. Mrs. Hare was better then; the sunshine and the business of stirring life had in some measure effaced the visions of the night, and restored her to her wonted frame of mind. The justice mentioned the accident to Joyce: they had not heard of it; but they had not been out during the day, and had received no visitors. Mrs. Hare was full of concern: Joyce was a universal favourite.

The cloth was removed, and the justice sat only a little while over his port wine, for he was engaged to smoke an after-dinner pipe with a brother magistrate, Mr. Justice Herbert.

"Shall you be home to tea, papa?" inquired Barbara.

"Is it any business of yours, young lady?"

"Oh, not in the least," answered Miss Barbara. "Only, if you had been coming home to tea, I suppose we must have waited for you."

"I thought you said, Richard, that you were going to spend the evening with Mr. Herbert," observed Mrs. Hare.

"So I am, responded the justice. "But Barbara has a great liking for the sound of her own tongue."

The justice departed, striding pompously down the gravel-walk. Barbara waltzed round the large room to a merry song, as if she felt his absence a relief. Perhaps she did so. "You can have tea now, mamma, at any time you please, without waiting until seven," said she.

"Yes, dear. Barbara."

"What, mamma?"

"I am sorry to hear of this calamity which has fallen upon Joyce. I should like to walk to East Lynne this evening and inquire after her; and see her, if I may. It would be only neighbourly."

Barbara's heart beat more quickly. Hers was indeed a true and lasting love, one that defied time and change. Having to bury it wholly within her, had perhaps only added to its force and depth. Who could suspect, under Barbara's sometimes cold, sometimes playful exterior, that *one* was hidden in her heart, filling up its every crevice? one who had no right there. The intimation that she might soon possibly be in his presence, sent every pulse throbbing.

"Walk, did you say, mamma? Should you do right to walk?"

"I feel quite equal to it. Since I have accustomed myself to take more exercise I feel better for it, and we have not been out to-day. Poor Joyce! What time shall we go, Barbara?"

"If we were to get up there by--by seven, I should think they will have dined."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Hare with alacrity, who was always pleased when some one else decided for her. "But I should like some tea before we start, Barbara."

Barbara took care that her mamma should have some tea, and then they proceeded towards East Lynne. It was a lovely evening. The air was warm, and the humming gnats sported in it, as if anxious to make the most of the waning summer. Mrs. Hare enjoyed it at first,

but ere she reached East Lynne she became aware that the walk was too much for her. She did not usually venture upon so long a one ; and probably the fever and agitation of the morning had somewhat impaired her day's strength. She placed her hand upon the iron gate as they were turning into the park, and stood still.

"I did wrong to come, Barbara."

"Lean on me, mamma. When you reach those benches, you can rest before proceeding to the house. It is very warm, and that may have fatigued you."

They gained the benches, which were placed under some of the dark trees, in view of the gates and the road, but not of the house, and Mrs. Hare sat down. Another minute, and they were surrounded. Mr. Carlyle, his wife and sister, who were taking an after-dinner stroll amidst the flowers with their guest, Francis Levison, discerned them and came up. The children, except the youngest, were of the party. Lady Isabel warmly welcomed Mrs. Hare : she had become quite attached to the delicate and suffering woman.

"I am a pretty one, am I not, Archibald, to come inquiring after an invalid, when I am so much of an invalid myself that I have to stop half way!" exclaimed Mrs. Hare, as Mr. Carlyle took her hand. "I am greatly concerned to hear of poor Joyce."

"You must stay the evening now you are here," cried Lady Isabel. "It will afford you a rest, and tea will refresh you."

"Oh, thank you, but we have taken tea," said Mrs. Hare.

"That is no reason why you should not take some more," she laughed. "Indeed, you seem too fatigued to be anything but a prisoner with us for this next hour or two."

"I fear I am," answered Mrs. Hare.

"Who are they?" Captain Levison was muttering to himself, as he contemplated the guests from a distance. "A deuced lovely girl, whoever she may be. I think I'll approach ; they don't look formidable."

He did approach, and the introduction was made. "Captain Levison, Mrs. Hare, and Miss Hare." A few formal words, and Captain Levison disappeared again, challenging little William Carlyle to a foot-race.

"How very ill your mamma looks!" Mr. Carlyle exclaimed to Barbara, when they were beyond the hearing of Mrs. Hare, who was busy talking with Lady Isabel and Miss Carlyle. "She has appeared so much stronger lately ; altogether better."

"The walk here has fatigued her ; I feared it would be too long ; so that she looks unusually pale," replied Barbara. "But what do you think has upset her again, Mr. Carlyle?"

He turned his inquiring eyes on Barbara.

"Papa came downstairs this morning saying mamma was ill with one of her old attacks of fever and restlessness. As papa spoke, I thought to myself, could mamma have been dreaming some foolish dream again—for you remember how ill she used to be after them. I ran up, and the first thing mamma said to me was, that she had had one of those dreadful dreams."

"I fancied she must have outlived her fear of them ; that her own good sense had come to her aid long ago, showing her how futile dreams

are, even if here do occasionally touch upon that unhappy mystery."

" You may just as well reason with a goat as reason with mamma, when she is suffering from the influence of one of those dreams," returned Barbara. " I tried it this morning; I asked her to call up— as you observe— good sense to her aid. All her answer was, ' How could she help her feelings? ' She did not induce the dream by thinking of Richard, or in any other way; and yet it came and shattered her. Of course, so far, mamma is right, for she cannot help the dreams coming."

Mr. Carlyle made no immediate reply. He picked up a ball belonging to one of the children, which lay in his path, and began tossing it gently in his hand. " It is a singular thing," he observed, presently, " that we do not hear from Richard."

" Oh, very; very. And I know mamma distresses herself about it. A few words, which she let fall this morning, betrayed it plainly. I am no believer in dreams," continued Barbara, " but I cannot deny that these, which take such hold upon mamma, bear upon the case in a curious manner. The one she had last night especially."

" What was it? " asked Mr. Carlyle.

" She ~~suspected~~ that the real murderer was at West Lynne. She thought he was at our house—as a visitor, she said, or as one making a morning call—and that she and I were conversing with him about the murder. He wanted to deny it; to put it upon Richard; and he turned and whispered to Otway Bethel, who stood behind his chair. That is another strange thing," added Barbara, lifting her blue eyes in their deep earnestness to the face of Mr. Carlyle.

" What is strange? You speak in riddles, Barbara."

" I mean, that Otway Bethel should invariably appear in her dreams. Until that stolen visit of Richards we had no idea that Bethel was near the spot at the time, and yet he had always made a prominent feature in these dreams. Richard assured mamma that Bethel had nothing to do with the murder, could have had nothing to do with it; but I do not think he shook mamma's belief that he *had*; that he was in some way connected with the mystery, though not, perhaps, the actual perpetrator. Well, Archibald, mamma has not dreamt of it; as she believes, since that visit of Richard's until last night; when again there was Bethel prominently in the dream. It certainly is singular."

Barbara, in the heat of her subject, in forgetfulness of the past, had called him by the old familiar name, " Archibald; " it was only when she was on the stilts of propriety and coldness that she said " Mr. Carlyle."

" And who was the murderer—in your mamma's dream? " continued Mr. Carlyle, speaking as gravely as though he were upon a subject that men ridicule not.

" She cannot remember; except that he seemed a gentleman, and that we held intercourse with him as one. Now that again is remarkable. We never told her, you know, our suspicions of Captain Thorn: Richard said 'another' had done it, but he did not give mamma the faintest indication of who that other might be, or what sphere of life he moved in. It seems to me that it would be more natural for mamma

to have taken up the idea that he was an obscure man ; we do not generally associate the notion of gentlemen with murderers : and yet, in her dream, she saw that he was a gentleman."

"I think you must be becoming a convert to the theory of dreams yourself, Barbara ; you are so very earnest," smiled Mr. Carlyle.

"No, not to dreams ; but I am earnest for my dear brother Richard's sake. Were it in *my* power to do anything to elucidate the mystery, I would spare no pains, no toil ; I would walk barefooted to the end of the earth to bring the truth to light. If ever that Thorn should come to West Lynne again, I will hope, and pray, and strive, to be able to bring it home to him."

"That Thorn does not appear in a hurry, again to favour West Lynne with his——"

Mr. Carlyle paused, for Barbara had hurriedly laid her hand upon his arm with a warning gesture. In talking, they had wandered across the park to its ornamental grounds, and were now in a quiet path, overshadowed on either side by a chain of imitation rocks. Seated astride on the summit of these rocks, right above where Mr. Carlyle and Barbara were standing, was Francis Levison. His face was turned from them, and he appeared intent upon a child's whip, winding leather round its handle. Whether he heard their footsteps or not, he did not turn. They quickened their pace, and left the walk, bending their steps backwards towards the group of ladies.

"Could he have heard what we were saying ?" ejaculated Barbara, below her breath.

Mr. Carlyle looked down on the concerned, flushed cheeks with a smile. Barbara was evidently disturbed. But for a certain episode in their lives, some years ago, he might have soothed her.

"I think he must have heard a little, Barbara : unless his own wits were wool-gathering : he might not have been attending. What if he did hear ? it is of no consequence."

"I was speaking, you know, of Captain Thorn—of his being the murderer."

"You were not speaking of Richard or his movements, so never mind. Levison is a stranger to the whole ; it is nothing to him : if he heard the name of Thorn mentioned, or could even have distinguished the subject, it would bear for him no interest ; would, as the saying runs, go in at one ear and out at the other. Be at rest, Barbara."

He really did look somewhat tenderly upon her as he spoke—and they were near enough to Lady Isabel for her to note the glance. She need not have been jealous : it bore no treachery to her. But she did note it : she had noted also their wandering away together, and she jumped to the conclusion that it was premeditated—that they had gone beyond her sight to enjoy each other's society for a few stolen moments. Wonderfully attractive looked Barbara that evening for Mr. Carlyle or any one else to steal away with. Her elegant, airy summer attire, her bright blue eyes, her charming features, and her lovely complexion. She had untied the strings of her pretty white bonnet, and was restlessly playing with them, more in thought than nervousness.

"Barbara, love, how are we to get home?" asked Mrs. Hare. "I fear I shall never be able to walk. I wish I had told Benjamin to bring the phaeton."

"I can send to him," said Mr. Carlyle.

"But it is too bad of me, Archibald, to take you and Lady Isabel by storm in this unceremonious manner, and to give your servants trouble besides."

"A great deal too bad, I think," returned Mr. Carlyle, with mock gravity. "As to the servants; the one who has to go will never recover from the trouble, depend upon it. You always were more concerned for others than for yourself, dear Mrs. Hare."

"And you were always kind, Archibald, clearing away difficulties for all, and making a trouble of nothing. Ah, Lady Isabel, were I a young woman, I should envy you your good husband: there are not many like him."

Possibly the sentence reminded Lady Isabel that another, who was young, might be envying her. Isabel's cheeks flushed crimson. Mr. Carlyle held out his strong arm to Mrs. Hare.

"If sufficiently rested, I fancy you would be more comfortable on a sofa indoors. Allow me to support you thither."

"And you can take my arm on the other side," cried Miss Carlyle, placing her tall form by Mrs. Hare. "Between us both we will pull you bravely along: your feet need scarcely touch the ground."

Mrs. Hare laughed, but said she thought Mr. Carlyle's arm would be sufficient. She took it, and they were turning towards the house, when her eye caught the form of a gentleman passing along the road by the park gates.

"Barbara, run!" she hurriedly exclaimed. "There's Tom Herbert going towards our house: he will call in and tell them to send the phaeton, if you ask him, which will save trouble to Mr. Carlyle's servants. Haste, child; you will be up with him in half a minute."

Barbara, thus urged, set off, on the spur of the moment, towards the gates, before the rest of the party well knew what was being done. It was too late for Mr. Carlyle to stop her and repeat that a servant should go, for Barbara was already up with Mr. Tom Herbert. The latter had seen her running towards him, and waited at the gate.

"Are you going past our house?" inquired Barbara, perceiving then that Otway Bethel also stood there, but just beyond view of the avenue.

"Yes. Why?" replied Tom Herbert, who was not famed for politeness, being blunt by nature and "fast" by habit.

"Mamma would be so much obliged to you if you would call in and leave word that Benjamin is to bring up the phaeton. Mamma walked here, intending to walk home, but she finds herself so fatigued as to be unequal to it."

"All right: I'll call and send him. What time?"

Nothing had been said to Barbara about the time, so that she was at liberty to name her own. "Ten o'clock. We shall be home then before papa."

"That you will," responded Tom Herbert. "He and the governor and two or three more old codgers are blowing clouds till you can't see

across the room : and they are sure to be at it again after supper. I say, Miss Barbara, are you good for a few picnics ? ”

“ Good for a great many,” returned Barbara.

“ Our girls want to get up some in the next week or two. Jack is at home, you know.”

“ Is he ? ” said Barbara, in surprise.

“ We had the letter yesterday, and he arrived to-day, a brother-officer with him. Jack vows if the girls don’t cater well for them in the way of amusement, he’ll never honour them by spending his leave at home again : so mind you keep yourself in readiness for any fun that may turn up. Good evening.”

“ Good evening, Miss Hare,” added Otway Bethel. As Barbara was returning their salutation, she became conscious of other footsteps, advancing from the same direction that they had come, and moved her head hastily round. Two gentlemen, walking arm-in-arm, were close upon her, in one of whom she recognized “ Jack,” otherwise Major Herbert. He stopped and held out his hand.

“ It is some years since we met, but I have not forgotten the pretty face of Miss Barbara,” he cried. “ A young girl’s face it was then, but it is a stately young lady’s now.”

Barbara laughed. “ Your brother told me you had arrived at West Lynne ; but I did not know you were so close to me. He has been asking me if I am ready for some pic— ”

Barbara’s voice faltered, and the rushing crimson of emotion dyed her face. Whose face was *that*, who was *he*, standing opposite to her, side by side with John Herbert ? She had seen the face but once, yet it had implanted itself upon her memory in characters of fire. Major Herbert continued to talk, but Barbara for once lost her self-possession. She could not listen ; she could not answer ; she could only stare at that face as if fascinated to the gaze, looking herself something like a simpleton, her shy blue eyes anxious and restless, and her lips turning to an ashy whiteness. A strange feeling of wonder, of superstition, was creeping over Barbara. Was that man before her in sober reality ? — or was it but a phantom, called up in her mind by the associations arising from her mother’s dream ; or by the conversation held not many moments ago with Mr. Carlyle ?

Major Herbert may have thought that Barbara, who was not attending to him, but to his companion, wished for an introduction, and he accordingly made it. “ Captain Thorn, Miss Hare.”

Then Barbara roused herself ; her senses were partially coming back to her, and she became alive to the fact that they must deem her behaviour unorthodox for a young lady.

“ I—I—looked at Captain Thorn, for I thought I remembered his face,” she stammered.

“ I was in West Lynne for a day or two some five years ago,” he observed.

“ Ah—yes,” returned Barbara. “ Are you going to make a long stay now ? ”

“ We have several weeks’ leave, of absence. Whether we shall remain here the whole time I cannot say.”

Barbara parted from them. Thought upon thought crowded upon

her brain as she flew back to East Lynne. She ran up the steps to the hall, gliding towards a group which stood near its further end—her mother, Miss Carlyle, Mr. Carlyle, and little Isabel. Lady Isabel she did not see. Mrs. Hare was then going up to see Joyce. In the agitation of the moment she stealthily touched Mr. Carlyle, and he stepped away from the rest to speak to her. She drew back towards the door of one of the reception rooms, and motioning him to approach.

"Oh, Archibald, I must speak to you alone. Could you not come out again for a little while?"

He nodded, and walked out openly by her side. Why should he not do so? What had he to conceal? But, unfortunately, Lady Isabel, who had only gone into that same room for a minute, and was coming out again to join Miss Hare, both saw Barbara's touch upon her husband's arm, marked her agitation, and heard her words. She went to one of the hall windows and watched them saunter towards the more retired parts of the grounds: she saw her husband send back Isabel. Never, since her marriage, had Lady Isabel's jealousy been excited as it was excited that evening.

"I—I feel—I scarcely know whether I am awake or dreaming," began Barbara, putting up her hand to her brow, and speaking in a dreamy tone. "Pardon me for bringing you out in this unceremonious manner."

"What state secrets have you to disclose?" asked Mr. Carlyle, in a jesting manner.

"We were speaking of mamma's dream. She said the impression it left upon her mind—that the murderer was at West Lynne—was so vivid that, in spite of common sense, she could not persuade herself to the contrary. Well—just now——"

"Barbara, what *can* be the matter?" said Mr. Carlyle, perceiving that her agitation was so great as to impede her words.

"*I have just seen him,*" she rejoined.

"Seen him?" echoed Mr. Carlyle, looking at her fixedly, a doubt crossing his mind whether Barbara's mind might be as wandering as her manner.

"What were almost my last words to you? That if ever that Thorn did come to West Lynne again, I would leave no stone unturned to bring it home to him. He is here, Archibald. When I went to the gates to speak to Tom Herbert, his brother Major Herbert was also there, and with him Captain Thorn; Bethel also. Do you wonder, I say, that I know not whether I am awake or dreaming? They have some weeks' holiday, and are here to spend it."

"It is a singular coincidence," exclaimed Mr. Carlyle.

"Had anything been wanting to convince me that Thorn is the guilty man, this would have done it," went on Barbara in her excitement. "Mamma's dream, with the steadfast impression it left upon her that Hallijohn's murderer was now at West Lynne——"

In turning the sharp corner of the covered walk, they came into contact with Captain Levison, who appeared to be either standing or sauntering there, his hands under his coat-tails. Again Barbara felt vexed, wondering how much he had heard, and beginning in her heart

to dislike the man. He accosted them familiarly, and appeared as if he would have turned with them but none could put down presumption more effectually than Mr. Carlyle, calm and gentlemanly though he always was.

"I will join you presently, Captain Levison," he said, with a wave of the hand. And he turned back with Barbara towards the open parts of the park.

"Do you like that Captain Levison?" she abruptly inquired, when they were beyond hearing.

"I cannot say that I do," was Mr. Carlyle's reply. "He is one who does not improve upon acquaintance."

"To me, it looks as though he had placed himself in our way to hear what we were saying."

"No, no, Barbara. What interest could it bear for him?"

Barbara did not contest the point : she turned to the one nearer at heart. "What must be our course with regard to Thorn?"

"It is more than I can tell you," replied Mr. Carlyle. "I cannot go up to the man and unceremoniously accuse him of being Hallijohn's murderer. In the first place, Barbara, we are not positively sure that he is the man spoken of by Richard."

"Oh, Archibald, how can you doubt? The extraordinary fact of his appearing here at this moment, coupled with mamma's dream, might assure us of it."

"Not quite," smiled Mr. Carlyle. "All we can do is to go cautiously to work, and endeavour to ascertain whether he is the same or not."

"And there is no one but you to do it!" wailed Barbara. "How vain and foolish are our boastings! I said I would not cease striving to bring it home to him, did he come again to West Lynne; and now he is here, even as the words were in my mouth, and what can I do? Nothing."

They took their way to the house, for there was nothing further to discuss. Captain Levison had entered before them, and saw Lady Isabel standing at the hall window. Yes, she was standing and looking ; brooding over her fancied wrongs.

"Who is that Miss Hare?" he demanded in a cynical tone. "They appear to have a pretty good understanding together : twice this evening I have met them in secret conversation."

"Did you speak to me, sir?" sharply and haughtily returned Lady Isabel.

"I did not mean to offend you : I spoke of Mr. Carlyle and Miss Hare," he replied in a gentle voice. He knew she had distinctly heard his first remark in spite of her question.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTAIN THORN IN TROUBLE.

IN talking over a bygone misfortune, we sometimes make the remark, or hear it made, "Circumstances worked against it." Such and such a thing might have turned out differently, we say, had the surrounding

circumstances been more in favour, but they were in opposition : they were dead against it. Now, if ever attendant circumstances can be said to have borne a baneful influence upon any person in this world, they most assuredly did at the present time upon Lady Isabel Carlyle.

Coeval, you see, with the arrival of the ex-captain, Levison, at East Lynne, all the jealous feeling touching her husband and Barbara Hare, was renewed, and with greater force than ever. Barbara : painfully anxious that something should be brought to light by which her brother should be exonerated from the terrible charge under which he lay, fully believing that Frederick Thorn, Captain in her Majesty's service, was the man who had committed the crime, as asserted by Richard : was in a state of excitement bordering on frenzy. Too keenly she felt the truth of her own words, that she was powerless, and could, of herself, do nothing. When she rose in the morning, after a night passed in troubled reflection more than in sleep, her thoughts were, "Oh, that I could this day find out something certain !" She was often at the Herberts ; frequently invited there, sometimes going uninvited. She and the Miss Herberts were intimate, and they pressed Barbara into all the impromptu fêtes got up for their brother now he was at home. There she of course saw Captain Thorn, and now and then she was enabled to pick up scraps of his past history. Eagerly were these scraps carried to Mr. Carlyle. Not to his office ; Barbara would not appear there. It may be, that she feared, if seen haunting Mr. Carlyle's office, Captain Thorn might come to hear of it, and suspect the agitation that was afloat—for who could know better than he the guilt that was falsely attaching to Richard ? Therefore she chose rather to go to East Lynne, or to waylay Mr. Carlyle as he passed to and from business. It was very little that she gathered to tell him. One evening she met him with the news that Thorn had been in former years at West Lynne, though she could not fix the date : another time she went boldly to East Lynne in eager anxiety, ostensibly to make a call on Lady Isabel—and a very restless one it was—contriving to make Mr. Carlyle understand that she wanted to see him alone. He went out with her when she departed, and accompanied her as far as the park gates, the two evidently absorbed in earnest converse : Lady Isabel's jealous eyes saw that. The communication Barbara had to make was, that Captain Thorn had let fall the avowal that he had once been "in trouble," though of its nature no indication was given. Another journey of hers took the scrap of news, that she had discovered he knew Swainson well. Part of all this, nay, perhaps the whole of it, Mr. Carlyle had found out for himself ; nevertheless he always received Barbara with vivid interest. Richard Hare was related to Miss Carlyle, and if his innocence could be made clear in the sight of men, it would be little less gratifying to them than to the Hares. Of Richard's innocence, Mr. Carlyle now entertained little, if any, doubt, and he was becoming impressed with the guilt of Captain Thorn. The latter spoke mysteriously of a portion of his past life—when he could be brought to speak of it at all—and he bore evidently some secret that he did not care to allude to.

But now, look at the treachery of that man, Francis Levison ! The

few meetings that Lady Isabel witnessed between her husband and Barbara would have been quite enough to excite her anger and jealousy, and to trouble her peace; but, in addition, Francis Levison took care to tell her of those she did not see. It pleased him—he best knew his own motive—to watch the movements of Mr. Carlyle and Barbara. There was a hedged pathway through the fields on the opposite side of the road to the residence of Justice Hare, and as Mr. Carlyle walked down the road to business, in his unsuspiciousness (not one time in fifty did he choose to ride: he said the walk to and fro kept him in health), Captain Levison would be strolling down like a serpent behind the hedge, watching all his movements, watching his interviews with Barbara, if any took place, watching Mr. Carlyle turn into the Grove, as he sometimes did, and perhaps watching Barbara run out of the house to meet him. It was all related, with miserable exaggeration, to Lady Isabel, whose jealousy, as a natural sequence, grew feverish in its extent.

It is scarcely necessary to explain that of Lady Isabel's jealousy Barbara knew nothing: not a shadow of suspicion had ever penetrated to her mind that Lady Isabel was jealous of her. Had she been told that this was the fact she would have laughed in derision at her informant. Mr. Carlyle's happy wife, proudly secure in her position and in his affection, jealous of *her*; of her, to whom he never gave an admiring look or a loving word! It would have taken a great deal to make Barbara believe that.

How different were the facts in reality. These meetings of Mr. Carlyle's and Barbara's, instead of being episodes of love-making and tender speeches, were positively painful to Barbara, from the unhappy nature of the subject to be discussed. Far from feeling a reprehensible pleasure in seeking the meetings with Mr. Carlyle, Barbara shrank from them. But that she was urged by dire necessity, in the interests of Richard, she would wholly have avoided them. Poor Barbara, in spite of that explosion years ago, was a lady, possessed of a lady's ideas and feelings, and—remembering that explosion—it did not at all accord with her pride to be thrusting herself into what might be called secret meetings with Archibald Carlyle. But Barbara, in her love for her brother, repressed all thoughts of self, and went perseveringly forward for Richard's sake.

Mr. Carlyle was seated one morning in his private room at his office, when his head clerk, Mr. Dill, came in. "A gentleman is asking to see you, Mr. Archibald."

"I am too busy to see any one for this hour to come. You know that, Dill."

"So I told him, sir, and he says he will wait. It is that Captain Thorn who is staying here with John Herbert."

Mr. Carlyle raised his eyes, and they encountered those of the old man: a peculiar expression was in the face of both. Mr. Carlyle glanced down at the parchments he was perusing, as if calculating his time. Then he looked up again and spoke.

"I will see him, Dill. Send him in."

The business, leading to the visit, was very simple. Captain Frederick Thorn had got himself into some trouble and vexation about

a "bill"—as too many other captains do on occasions, and he had come to crave advice of Mr. Carlyle.

Mr. Carlyle felt dubious as to giving it. This Captain Thorn was a pleasant, attractive man, who was much on acquaintance ; one whom Mr. Carlyle would have been pleased, in a friendly point of view, and setting professional interests apart, to help out of his difficulties ; but if he were the villain they suspected him to be, the man with crime upon his hand, then Mr. Carlyle would have ordered his office door held wide that he might slink out of it.

" Cannot you advise me as to what my course ought to be ? " he inquired, detecting Mr. Carlyle's hesitation.

" I could advise you, certainly. But—you must excuse my plain speaking, Captain Thorn—I like to know who my clients are, before I take up their cause or accept them as clients."

" I am able to pay you," was Captain Thorn's reply. " I am not short of ready money ; only this bill—"

Mr. Carlyle laughed out, after having bit his lip with annoyance.

" It was a natural inference of yours," he said, " but I assure you I was not thinking of your purse. My father held it right never to undertake business for a stranger : unless a man was good, and his cause good, he did not entertain it : and I have acted on the same principle. By these means, the position and character of our business is such as is rarely obtained by a solicitor. Now, in saying that you are a stranger to me, I am not casting any doubt upon you, Captain Thorn ; I am merely upholding my ordinary practice."

" My family is well connected," was Captain Thorn's next venture.

" Excuse me ; family has nothing to do with it. If the poorest day labourer, if a pauper out of the workhouse came to me for advice, he should be heartily welcome to it, provided he were an honest man in the face of day. Again I repeat, you must take no offence at what I say, for I cast no reflection on you : I only urge that you and your character are unknown to me."

Curious words from a lawyer to a client-aspirant, and Captain Thorn found them so. But Mr. Carlyle's tone was so courteous, his manner so affable, in fact, he was so thoroughly the gentleman, that it was impossible to feel hurt.

" Well—how can I convince you that I am respectable ? I have served my country ever since I was sixteen, and my brother-officers have found no cause of complaint. My position as an officer and a gentleman would be generally deemed a sufficient guarantee. Inquire of John Herbert. The Herberts, too, are friends of yours, and they have not disdained to give me house-room amidst their family."

" True," returned Mr. Carlyle, feeling that he could not well object further ; and also that all men should be considered innocent until proved guilty. " At any rate, I will advise you as to what must be done at present," he added, " though if the affair must go on, I do not promise that I can continue to act for you. I am very busy just now."

Captain Thorn explained his dilemma, and Mr. Carlyle told him what to do in it. " Were you not at West Lynne some ten years ago ? " he suddenly inquired at the close of the conversation. " You denied

it to me once at my house, but I concluded, from an observation you let fall, that you had been here."

"Yes, I was," replied Captain Thorn, in a confidential tone. "I don't mind owning it to you in confidence, but I do not wish it to get abroad. I was not at West Lynne, but in its neighbourhood. The fact is, when I was a careless young fellow, I was stopping a few miles from here, and got into a scrape, through a—a—in short, it was an affair of gallantry. I did not show out very well at the time, and I don't care that it should be known that I am in the county again."

Mr. Carlyle's pulses—for Richard Hare's sake—beat a shade quicker. The avowal "an affair of gallantry" was almost a confirmation of his suspicions.

"Yes," he pointedly said. "The girl was Afy Hallijohn."

"Afy—who?" repeated Captain Thorn, opening his eyes, and fixing them on Mr. Carlyle's.

"Afy Hallijohn."

Captain Thorn continued to look at Mr. Carlyle, an amused expression, rather than any other, predominant on his features. "You are mistaken," he observed. "Afy Hallijohn? I never heard the name before in my life."

"Did you never hear, or know, that a dreadful tragedy was enacted in this place about that period?" returned Mr. Carlyle, in a low, meaning tone. "That Afy Hallijohn's father——"

"Oh, stay, stay, stay," hastily interrupted Captain Thorn. "I am telling a story in saying I never heard the name. Afy Hallijohn? Why, that's the girl Tom Herbert was telling me about: who—what was it?—disappeared, after her father was murdered."

"Murdered in his own cottage; almost in Afy's presence; murdered by—by—" Mr. Carlyle recollectcd himself. He had spoken more impulsively than was his custom. "Hallijohn was my father's faithful clerk for many years," he more calmly concluded.

"And he who committed the murder, was young Hare, son of Justice Hare, and brother to that attractive girl, Barbara. Your speaking of this has brought what they told me to my recollection. The first evening I was at the Herberts', Justice, Hare and others were there, smoking—half a dozen pipes were going at once; I also saw Miss Barbara that evening at your park gates; and Tom told me of the murder. An awful calamity for the Hares. I suppose that is the reason the young lady is Miss Hare still. One, with her fortune and good looks, ought to have changed her name ere this."

"No, it is not the reason," resumed Mr. Carlyle.

"What is the reason, then?"

A faint flush tinged Mr. Carlyle's brow. "I know more than one who would be glad to have Barbara, in spite of the murder. Do not depreciate Miss Hare."

"Not I, indeed; I like the young lady too well," replied Captain Thorn. "The girl Afy has never been heard of since, has she?"

"Never," said Mr. Carlyle. "Did you know her well?" he deliberately added.

"I never knew her at all, if you mean Afy Hallijohn. Why should

you think I did? I never heard of her till Tom Herbert amused me with the history."

Mr. Carlyle devoutly wished he could tell whether the man before him was speaking truth or falsehood. He continued :

" Afy's favours—I mean her smiles and her chatter—were pretty freely dispersed, for she was heedless and vain. Amidst others who had the credit for occasionally basking in her rays, was a gentleman of the name of Thorn. Was it not yourself?"

Captain Thorn stroked his moustache with an air that seemed to say he could boast of his share of such baskings ; in short, as if he felt half inclined to do it. " Upon my word," he simpered, " you do me too much honour : I cannot confess to having been favoured by Miss Afy."

" Then she was not the—the damsel you speak of, who drove you—if I understood aright—from the locality?" resumed Mr. Carlyle, fixing his eyes upon him, so as to take in every tone of the answer, and shade of the countenance, as he gave it.

" I should think not, indeed. It was a married lady, more's the pity ; young, pretty, vain, and heedless, as you represent this Afy. Things went smoother after a time, and she and her husband—a stupid country yeoman—became reconciled. But I have been ashamed of the affair ever since ; doubly ashamed of it since I have grown wiser, and I do not care ever to be recognized as the actor in it, or to have it raked up against me."

Captain Thorn rose, and took a somewhat hasty leave. Was he, or was he not the man? Mr. Carlyle could not solve the doubt.

Mr. Dill came in as he disappeared, closed the door and advanced to his master, speaking in an undertone.

" Mr. Archibald, has it struck you that the gentleman just gone out may be the Lieutenant Thorn you once spoke to me about?—he who had used to gallop over from Swainson to court Afy Hallijohn."

" It has struck me so most forcibly," replied Mr. Carlyle. " Dill, I would give five hundred pounds out of my pocket this moment, to be assured of the fact—if he is the same."

" I have seen him several times since he has been staying with the Herberts," pursued the old gentleman, " and my doubts have naturally been excited, as to whether it could be the man in question. Curiously enough, Bezzant, the Doctor, was over there yesterday from Swainson ; and, as I was walking with him arm-in-arm, we met Captain Thorn. The two recognized each other and bowed, but merely as distant acquaintances. ' Do you know that gentleman?' said I to Bezzant. ' Yes,' he answered, ' it is Mr. Frederick.' ' Mr. Frederick with something added to it,' said I. ' his name is Thorn.' ' I know that,' returned Bezzant, " but when he was in Swainson some years ago, he chose to drop the Thorn, and the town in general knew him only as Mr. Frederick.' ' What was he doing there, Bezzant?' I asked. ' Amusing himself and getting into mischief,' was the answer : ' nothing very bad ; only the random scrapes of young men.' ' Was he often on horseback, riding to a distance?' was my next question. ' Yes, that he was,' replied Bezzant ; ' none more fond of galloping across country than he : I used to tell him he'd ride his horse's tail off.' Now, Mr. Archibald, what do you think?" concluded the old

clerk : " and so far as I could make out, this was about the very time of the tragedy at Halljohn's."

" Think ? " replied Mr. Carlyle, " what can I think but that it is the same man ? I am convinced of it now."

And, leaning back in his chair, he fell into a deep reverie, regardless of the parchments that lay before him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET SCRAP OF PAPER.

THE weeks went on ; two or three of them ; and things seemed to be progressing backwards rather than forwards—if that is not an Irishism. Francis Levison's affairs—that is, the adjustment of them—did not advance : creditors were obstinate. He had been three times over to Levison Park, securely boxed up in Mr. Carlyle's close carriage from prying eyes ; but Sir Peter seemed to be turning as obdurate as the creditors. Captain Levison had deceived him, he found out : inasmuch as certain sums of money, handed over by Sir Peter some time back to settle certain claims, had been by the gentleman appropriated to his own purposes. Sir Peter did not appear inclined to forgive the deceit, and vowed he would do nothing further for the present. There was nothing for him but to return to the Continent, Captain Levison observed. And the best place for him ; plenty of scamps congregated there, was the retort of Sir Peter. He apparently meant what he said, for when Francis Levison rose to leave, Sir Peter took out of his pocket-book notes to the value of £100, told him that would pay the expense he had been put to in coming, and that his allowance would be continued as usual.

" How did you get on to-day with Sir Peter ? " inquired Mr. Carlyle, that evening at dinner, when his guest was back at East Lynne.

" Middling," replied Francis Levison. " I did not do much with him. These old staggers like to take their own time over things."

An answer false as he was. It did not suit his plans to quit East Lynne yet ; and, had he told the truth, he would have had no plea for remaining.

Another thing that was going on fast to bad, instead of to good, was the jealousy of Lady Isabel. How could it be otherwise, kept up, as it was, by Barbara's frequent meetings with Mr. Carlyle, and by Captain Levison's connivents and false insinuations regarding them ? Discontented with herself and with every one about her, Isabel was living now in a state of excitement ; a dangerous resentment against her husband working in her heart. That very day, the one of Captain Levison's visit to Levison Park, in driving through West Lynne in the pony carriage, she had come upon her husband in close converse with Barbara Hare. So absorbed were they that they never saw her, though her carriage passed close to the pavement on which they stood.

On the following morning, as the Hare family were seated at breakfast, the postman was seen turning towards the house. Barbara sprang from her seat to the open window, and the man advanced to her.

" Only one, miss. It is for yourself."

" Who is it from?" began the justice, as Barbara returned to her chair. In letters, as in other things, he was anxious to know their contents, whether they were addressed to himself or not.

" It is from Anne, papa," replied Barbara, as she placed the letter by her side on the table.

" Why don't you open it and see what she says?"

" I will, directly. I am just going to pour out some more tea for mamma."

Barbara handed her mother the tea, and then took up her letter. As she opened it, a small bit of folded paper fell upon her lap. Fortunately, most fortunately, Justice Hare, who at the moment had his nose in his coffee-cup, did not see it, but Mrs. Hare did.

" Barbara, you have dropped something."

Barbara had seen it also, and was clutching stealthily at the "something" with almost a guilty movement. She had no answer at hand, but bent her eyes upon her letter, and Mrs. Hare spoke again.

" My love, something dropped on to your lap."

" Don't you hear your mamma, young lady?" pursued the justice. " What is it you have dropped?"

Barbara, with a crimson face, rose from her chair and shook out her pretty muslin dress—somehow, Barbara's dresses were always pretty. " There's nothing at all, papa, nothing that I can see." And, in sitting down, she contrived to give her mother a warning look, which silenced Mrs. Hare. Then Barbara read her sister's letter, and laid it open on the table for the benefit of any one who might like to do the same.

The justice snatched it up, taking first benefit to himself—as he was sure to do. He threw it down, grumbling.

" Not much in it. There never is in Anne's letters: she won't set the Thames on fire as a correspondent. As if any one cared to hear about the baby's being ' short-coated ! ' I think I'll have a cup more coffee, Barbara."

Finally the justice finished his breakfast and strolled out into the garden. Mrs. Hare turned to Barbara.

" My dear, why did you give me that mysterious look? And what was it that dropped into your lap? It seemed to fall from Anne's letter."

" Well, mamma, it did fall from Anne's letter. You know how exacting papa is—always will see and inquire into everything—so, when Anne wants to tell me any bit of news that she does not care the whole world to know, she writes it on a separate bit of paper—and puts it inside her letter. I suppose it was one of those bits that fell out."

" Child, I cannot let you insinuate that your papa has no right to look into your letters."

" Of course not, mamma," was Miss Barbara's rejoinder. " But if he had a grain of common sense, he might know that I and Anne may sometimes have little private matters to say to each other, not necessary or expedient for him to pry into."

Barbara had produced the scrap of paper as she spoke, and was

opening it." Mrs. Hare watched her movements, and her countenance. She saw the latter flush suddenly and vividly, and then become deadly pale : she saw Barbara crush the note in her hand when read.

"Oh, mamma!" she uttered.

The flush of emotion came also into Mrs. Hare's delicate cheeks. "Barbara! is it bad news?"

"Mamma,—it—it—is about Richard!" she whispered, glancing at the door and window, to see that none might be within sight or hearing. "I never thought of him : I only fancied Anne might be sending me some bit of news concerning her own affairs. Good Heavens! how fortunate—how providential that papa did not see the paper fall ; and that you did not persist in your inquiries ! If he——"

"Barbara, you are keeping me in suspense," interrupted Mrs. Hare, who had also grown white. "What should Anne know about Richard?"

Barbara smoothed out the writing and held it before her mother. It was as follows :

"I have had a curious note from R. It was without date or signature, but I knew his handwriting. He tells me to let you know, in the most sure and secret manner, that he will soon be paying you another night visit. You are to watch the grove every evening when the present moon grows bright."

Mrs. Hare covered her face for some minutes. "Thank God for all His mercies," she mumbled.

"Oh, mamma, but it is an awful risk for him to run!"

"But to know that he is in life—to know that he is in life ! And as for the risk—Barbara, I dread it not. The same good God who protected him through the last visit, will protect him through this. He will not forsake the oppressed and the innocent. Destroy that paper, child."

"Archibald Carlyle must first see it, mamma. I will destroy it afterwards."

"Then seek him to-day and show it him. I shall not be easy until it is destroyed, Barbara."

Braving the comments of the gossips, hoping the visit would not reach the ears or eyes of the justice, Barbara went that day to the office of Mr. Carlyle. He was not there : he was not at West Lynne : he had gone to Lynneborough on business, and Mr. Dill thought it doubtful whether he would be at the office again that day. If so, it would be late in the afternoon. Barbara, as soon as their own dinner was over, took up her patient station at the gate, hoping to see him pass ; but the time went by, and he did not do so. She had little doubt that he had returned home without going again to West Lynne.

What should she do ? Go up to East Lynne and see him, said her conscience. Barbara's mind was in a strangely excited state. It appeared to her that this visit of Richard's must have been especially designed by Providence, that he might be confronted with Thorn. That they must be confronted the one with the other, or rather, that Richard must have the opportunity given him of seeing Thorn, was a matter of course ; though how it was to be brought about, Barbara could not guess. For all action, all plans, she must depend upon Mr.

Carlyle ; he ought to be put into immediate possession of the news, for the moon was already three or four days old, and there was no knowing when Richard might appear.

" Manima," she said, returning indoors, after seeing the justice depart upon an evening visit to the Buck's Head, where he and certain other justices and gentlemen sometimes congregated to smoke and chat : " I shall go up to East Lynne if you have no objection. I must see Mr. Carlyle."

" What objection can I have, my dear ? I am all anxiety for you to see him. It was so unfortunate that he was out to-day when you ventured to his office. Mind you tell him all : and ask him what is best to be done."

Away went Barbara. It had struck seven when she arrived at East Lynne.

" Is Mr. Carlyle disengaged ? "

" Mr. Carlyle is not yet home, miss. My lady and Miss Carlyle are waiting dinner for him."

A check for Barbara. The servant asked her to walk in, but she declined, and turned from the door. She was in no mood for paying visits.

Lady Isabel had been standing at the window watching for her husband, wondering what made him so late : she observed Barbara approach the house, and saw her walk away again. Presently the servant who had answered the door entered the drawing-room.

" Was not that Miss Hare ? "

" Yes, my lady," was the man's reply. " She wanted my master. I said your ladyship was at home, but she would not enter."

Isabel said no more. She caught the eyes of Francis Levison fixed on her with as much compassionate meaning as they dared express. She clasped her hands in pain, and turned again to the window.

Barbara was slowly walking down the avenue, Mr. Carlyle was then in sight, walking quickly. Lady Isabel saw their hands meet in greeting.

" Oh, I am so thankful to have met you ! " exclaimed Barbara, impulsively. " I actually went to your office to-day, and I have been now to your house. We have great news ! "

" Ay ! What ? About Thorn ? "

" No, about Richard," replied Barbara, taking the scrap of paper from the folds of her dress. " This came to me this morning, from Anne."

Mr. Carlyle took the document, and Barbara looked over him whilst he read it : neither of them thinking that Lady Isabel's jealous eyes, and Captain Levison's evil ones, were strained on them from the distant windows. Miss Carlyle's also, for the matter of that.

" Archibald, it seems to me that Providence must be directing him hither at this moment. Our suspicions, with regard to Thorn, can now be set at rest. You must contrive that Richard shall see him. What can he be coming again for ? "

More money, was the supposition of Mr. Carlyle. " Does Mrs. Hare know of this ? "

She does, unfortunately. I opened the paper before her, never dreaming it was connected with Richard. I wish I could have spared

mamma the news, until he was actually here : the expectation and suspense I fear will make her ill. It terrifies me to such an extent that I don't know what I am about," she continued. " Not a moment's rest or peace shall I have until he has been and is gone again. Poor, wandering, unhappy Richard ! and not to be guilty ! "

" He acted as though he were guilty, Barbara. And that line of conduct often entails as much trouble as real guilt."

" You do not believe him guilty ? " she almost passionately uttered.

" I do not. I have little doubt of the guilt of Thorn."

" Oh, if it could but be brought home to him ! " reiterated Barbara ; " so that Richard might be cleared in the sight of day. How can you contrive that he shall see Thorn ?

" I cannot tell ; I must think it over. Let me know the instant he arrives, Barbara."

" Of course I shall. It may be that he does not want money ; that his errand is only to see mamma. He was always so fond of her."

" I must leave you," said Mr. Carlyle, taking her hand in token of farewell. Then, as the thought occurred to him, he turned and walked a few steps with her, without releasing it. He was probably quite unconscious that he retained it : she was not so.

" You know, Barbara, if he should want money and it should not be convenient to Mrs. Hare to supply it at so short a notice, I can give it him, as I did before."

" Thank you, thank you, Archibald. Mamma felt sure you would."

She lifted her eyes to his with an expression of gratitude - but for the habitual control to which she had schooled herself, a warmer feeling might have mingled with it. Mr. Carlyle nodded pleasantly, and then set off rapidly towards the house.

Five minutes in his dressing-chamber, and he entered the drawing-room, apologizing for having kept them waiting, and explaining that he had been compelled to go to his office to give some orders, after his return from Lynneborough. Lady Isabel's lips were pressed together, and she preserved an obstinate silence. Mr. Carlyle, in his unsuspicion, did not notice it.

" What did Barbara Hare want ? " demanded Miss Carlyle, during dinner.

" She wanted to see me on business," was his reply, given in a tone that certainly did not invite his sister to pursue the subject. " Will you take some more fish, Isabel ? "

" What was that you were reading over with her ? " pursued the indefatigable Miss Corny. " It looked like a note."

" Ah, that would be telling," returned Mr. Carlyle, willing to turn it off with gaiety. " If young ladies choose to make me privy to their love-letters, I cannot betray confidence, you know."

" What rubbish, Archibald ! " quoth she. " As if you could not say outright what Barbara wants, without making a mystery of it. And she seems to be always wanting you now."

Mr. Carlyle glanced at his sister, a quick, peculiar look : it seemed, to her, to speak both of seriousness and warning. Involuntarily her thoughts—and her fears—flew to the past.

" Archibald ! Archibald ! " she uttered, repeating the name as if she

could not get any further, in her dread. "It—it—is nev'r—that old affair is never being reaped up again?"

Now, Miss Carlyle's "old affair" referred to one sole and sore point—Richard Hare : and so Mr. Carlyle understood it. Lady Isabel unhappily believed that any "old affair" could only have reference to the bygone loves of her husband and Barbara.

"You will oblige me by going on with your dinner, Cornelia," gravely responded Mr. Carlyle. Then—assuming a more laughing tone—"I tell you it is unreasonable to expect me to betray a young lady's secrets, although she may choose to confide them professionally to me. What say you, Captain Levison?"

Captain Levison bowed ; a smile of mockery, all too perceptible to Lady Isabel, on his lip. And Miss Carlyle bent her head over her plate, and went on with her dinner, as meek as a lamb.

That same evening, Lady Isabel's indignant and rebellious heart condescended to speak of it when alone with her husband.

"What is it that she wants with you so much, that Barbara Hare?"

"It is private business, Isabel. She has to bring me messages from her mother."

"Must the business be kept from me?"

He was silent for a moment, considering whether he might tell her. But it was impossible he could speak, even to his wife, of the suspicion they were attaching to Captain Thorn ; it would have been unfair and wrong : neither could he betray that a secret visit was expected from Richard. To no one would he betray that : unless Miss Corny, with her questioning, drew it out of him : and she was safe and true.

"It would not make you happier to know it, Isabel. There is a dark secret, you are aware, touching the Hare family : it is connected with that."

She did not put faith in a word of the reply. She believed he could not tell her because her feelings, as his wife, would be outraged by the confession : and it goaded her anger into recklessness. Mr. Carlyle on his part, never gave a thought to the supposition that she might be jealous : he had believed that nonsense at an end years ago. He was perfectly honourable and true, giving her no shadow of cause or reason to be jealous of him : and, being a practical, matter-of-fact man, it did not occur to him that she could be so.

Lady Isabel was sitting the following moring, moody and out of sorts. Captain Levison had accompanied Mr. Carlyle in the most friendly manner possible to the park gates on his departure, and then stolen along the hedge-walk. He returned to Lady Isabel with the news of an "ardent" interview with Barbara, who had been watching for Mr. Carlyle at the gate of the Grove. She sat, sullenly digesting the tidings, when a note was brought in. It proved to be an invitation to dinner for the following Tuesday, at Mrs. Jeafferson's—for Mr. and Lady Isabel Carlyle and Miss Carlyle.

She drew her desk towards her petulantly, to answer it on the spur of the moment, first of all passing the note across the table to Miss Carlyle.

"Do you go?" asked Miss Carlyle.

"Yes," replied Lady Isabel. "Mr. Carlyle and I both want a change

of some sort," she added, "in a mocking sort of spirit ; " it may be as well to have it, if only for an evening." In truth, this unhappy jealousy, this distrust of her husband, appeared to have altered Lady Isabel's very nature.

" And leave Captain Levison alone ? " returned Miss Carlyle.

Lady Isabel bent over her desk, making no reply.

" What will you do with him, I ask ? " persisted Miss Carlyle.

" He can remain here, and dine by himself. Shall I accept the invitation for you ? "

" No ; I shall not go," said Miss Carlyle.

" Then, in that case, there can be no difficulty with regard to Captain Levison," coldly spoke Lady Isabel.

" I don't want his company : I am not fond of it," cried Miss Carlyle. " I would go to Mrs. Jeafferson's, but that I should require a new dress."

" That's easily had," said Lady Isabel. " I shall want one myself."

" You want a new dress ! " uttered Miss Carlyle. " Why, you have dozens ! "

" I don't know that I could count a dozen in all," returned Isabel, chafing at the remark and the continual thwarting put upon her by Miss Carlyle, which had latterly seemed to be more than usually hard to endure. Trifling ills try the temper more than great ones.

Lady Isabel concluded her note, folded, sealed it, and then rang the bell. As the man left the room with it, she desired that Wilson might be sent to her.

" Is it this morning, Wilson, that the dressmaker comes to try on Miss Isabel's dress ? " she inquired.

Wilson hesitated and stammered, and glanced from her mistress to Miss Carlyle. The latter looked up from her work.

" The dressmaker's not coming," spoke she, sharply. " I countermanded the order for the frock, for Isabel does not require it."

" She does require it," answered Lady Isabel, in perhaps the most displeased tone she had ever used to Miss Carlyle. " I am a competent judge of what is necessary for my own children."

" She no more requires a new frock than that table requires one, or than you require the one you are longing for," stoically persisted Miss Carlyle. " She has ever so many lying by : and her striped silk, turned, will make up as handsomely as ever."

Wilson backed out of the room and closed the door softly, but her mistress caught a compassionate look directed towards her. Her heart felt bursting with indignation and despair : there seemed to be no side on which she could turn for refuge. Pitted by her own servants !

She re-opened her desk, and dashed off a haughty, peremptory note for the attendance of the dressmaker at East Lynne, commanding its immediate despatch.

Miss Corny groaned in her wrath. " You will be sorry for not listening to me, ma'mah, when your husband shall be brought to poverty. He works like a horse now ; and, with all his slaving, can scarcely, I fear, keep expenses down."

Poor Lady Isabel, ever sensitive, began to think they might, what

with one thing and another, be spending more than Mr. Carlyle's means would justify ; she knew that their expenses were considerable. The same tale had been dinned into her ear ever since she married him. She gave up in that moment all thought of the new dress for herself and for Isabel : but her spirit, in her deep unhappiness, felt sick and faint within her.

Wilson meanwhile had flown to Joyce's room, and was exercising her dearly-beloved tongue in an exaggerated account of the matter : how Miss Carlyle put upon my lady, and had forbidden a new dress to her, as well as the frock to Miss Isabel.

Joyce, sitting up that day for the first time, was gazing from the window at Captain Levison as Wilson spoke.

"He's a handsome man—to look at him from here," she observed.
And yet a few more days passed on.

CHAPTER VIII.

RICHARD HARE AT MR. DILL'S WINDOW.

BRIGHT was the moon on that genial Monday night : bright were the evening stars as they shone upon a solitary wayfarer who walked on the shady side of the road, with his head down, as though he cared not to court observation. A labourer apparently, for he wore a smock frock and hobnailed shoes ; but his whiskers were large and black, hiding the lower part of his face, and his broad-brimmed "wide-awake" came far over his brows. He drew near the dwelling of Justice Hare, plunged rapidly over some palings (after looking well to the right and left) into a field, and thence over the side wall into Mr. Hare's garden, where he remained amidst the trees.

Now, by some mischievous spirit of intuition or contrariety, Justice Hare was spending this evening at home, a thing which did not happen once in six months, unless he had friends with him. Barbara, anxious, troubled, worn out with the suspense of watching for her brother, would have given her head for her father to go out. But no : there sat the stern justice in full view of the garden and the grove, his chair drawn precisely in front of the window, his wig awry, and a long pipe in his mouth.

"Are you not going out, Richard ?" Mrs. Hare ventured to say.

"No."

"Mamma, shall I ring for the shutters to be closed?" asked Barbara, by-and-by.

"Shutters closed!" said the justice. "Who'd shut out this bright moon? You have the lamp at the far end of the room, young lady, and can go to it."

Barbara ejaculated an inward prayer for patience—for safety for Richard, if he did come, and waited on, watching the grove in the distance. The signal came ; her quick eye caught it, a movement as if some person or thing had stepped out beyond the trees and stepped back again. Barbara's face turned white and her lips dry.

"I am so hot!" she ejaculated, in her confused eagerness for an excuse. "I must take a turn in the garden."

She stole out, throwing a dark shawl over her shoulders, that it might render her less conspicuous to the justice; and her dress that evening was a dark silk. She did not dare to stand still when she reached the trees, or to penetrate them, but she caught glimpses of Richard's face, and her heart ached at the change in it. It was white, thin, and full of care; and his hair, he told her, was turning grey.

"Oh, Richard, darling, I may not stop and talk to you!" she wailed, in a deep whisper. "Papa is at home, you see, of all nights in the year."

"Can't I see my mother?"

"How can you? You must wait until to-morrow night."

"I don't like waiting a second night, Barbara. There's danger in every inch of ground this neighbourhood contains."

"But you must wait, Richard; for other reasons. That man who caused all the mischief, Thorn—"

"Hang him!" gloomily interrupted Richard.

"Is at West Lynne. At least, there is a Thorn here whom we, I and Mr. Carlyle, believe to be the same, and we want you to see him."

"Let me see him," panted Richard, whom the news appeared to agitate. "Let me see him! Barbara—I say—"

Barbara had passed on again, returning presently. "You know, Richard, I must keep moving, with papa's eyes there. He is a tall man, very good-looking, very fond of dress and ornaments, especially of diamonds."

"That's he," cried Richard, eagerly.

"Mr. Carlyle will contrive that you shall see him," she continued, stooping as if to tie her shoe. "Should it prove to be the same, perhaps nothing can be immediately done towards clearing you, but it will be a great point ascertained. Are you sure you should know him again?"

"Sure that I should know *him!*" uttered Richard Hare. "Should I know my own father? Should I know you? And you are not engraven on my heart in letters of blood, as he is. How and when am I to see him, Barbara?"

"I can tell you nothing until I have consulted Mr. Carlyle. Be here to-morrow as soon as ever the dusk will permit you: perhaps Mr. Carlyle will contrive to bring him here. If—"

The window was thrown open, and the stentorian voice of Justice Hare was heard from it.

"Barbara, are you wandering about there to take cold? Come in. Come in, I say."

"Oh, Richard, I am so sorry!" she lingered to whisper. "But papa is sure to be out to-morrow night: he would not stay in two evenings running. Good night, dear."

There must be no delay now, and the next day Barbara, braving comments, appealed once more at the office of Mr. Carlyle. Terribly did the rules of contrary seem in action just then: Mr. Carlyle was not in, and the clerks did not know when to expect him: he had gone out for some hours, they believed.

"Mr. Dill," urged Barbara, as the old gentleman came to the door to greet her, "I *must* see him."

"He will not be in till late in the afternoon, Miss Barbara. I expect him then. Is it anything I can do for you?"

"No, no," sighed Barbara.

At that moment Lady Isabel and her little girl passed in the chariot. She saw Barbara at her husband's door; what should she be doing there, unless paying him a visit? A slight, haughty bow to Barbara, a pleasant nod and smile to Mr. Dill, and the carriage bowed on.

It was four o'clock before Barbara could see Mr. Carlyle. She communicated her tidings, that Richard had arrived.

Mr. Carlyle held deceit and all underhand doings in especial abhorrence: yet he deemed that he was acting right, under the circumstances, in allowing Captain Thorn to be secretly seen by Richard Hare. In haste he arranged his plans. It was the evening of his own dinner engagement at Mrs. Jeafferson's; but that he must give up. Telling Barbara to despatch Richard to his office as soon as he should make his appearance in the grove, and to urge him to come boldly, for that none would know him in his disguise, he wrote a hurried note to Thorn, requesting him also to be at his office at eight o'clock that evening, as he had something to communicate to him. The latter plea was no fiction, for he had received an important communication that morning relative to the business on which Captain Thorn had consulted him, and his own absence from the office had alone prevented his sending for him earlier.

Other matters were demanding the attention of Mr. Carlyle, and it was five o'clock ere he departed for East Lynne: he would not have gone so early, but that he must inform his wife of his inability to keep his dinner engagement. Mr. Carlyle was one who never hesitated to sacrifice personal gratification to friendship or to business.

The chariot was at the door, and Lady Isabel was dressed and waiting for him in her dressing-room. "Did you forget that the Jeaffersons dine at six?" was her greeting.

"No, Isabel; but it was impossible for me to get here before. And I should not have come so soon, but to tell you that I cannot accompany you. You must make my excuses to Mrs. Jeafferson."

A pause. Strange thoughts were running through Lady Isabel's mind. "Why so?" she inquired.

"Some business has arisen which I am compelled to attend to this evening. As soon as I have snatched my dinner at home, I must hasten back to the office."

Was he making this excuse to spend the hours of her absence with Barbara Hare? The idea that it was so took firm possession of her mind, and remained there. Her face expressed a variety of feelings, the most prominent that of resentment. Mr. Carlyle saw it.

"You must not be vexed, Isabel. I assure you it is no fault of mine. It is important private business which cannot be put off, and which I cannot delegate to Dill. I am sorry it should so have happened."

"You never return to the office in an evening," she remarked, with pale lips.

"No : because, if anything arises to take us there after hours, Dill officiates. But the business to-night must be done by myself."

Another pause. Lady Isabel suddenly broke it. "Shall you join us later in the evening?"

"I believe I shall not be able to do so."

She drew her light shawl round her shoulders, and swept down the staircase. Mr. Carlyle followed, to place her in the carriage. When he said farewell she never answered, but looked straight out before her with a stony look.

"What time, my lady?" inquired the footman, as she alighted at Mrs. Jeaferson's.

"Early. Half-past nine."

A little before eight o'clock, Richard Hare, in his smock frock, his slouching hat, and his false whiskers, rang dubiously at the outer door of Mr. Carlyle's office. That gentleman instantly opened it. He was quite alone.

"Come in, Richard," said he, grasping his hand. "Did you meet many whom you knew?"

"I never looked whom I met, sir," was the reply. "I thought if I looked at people, they might look at me, so I came straight ahead with my eyes before me. How the place is altered! There's a new brick house at the corner where old Morgan's shop used to be."

"That's the new police station: West Lynne, I assure you, is becoming grand in public buildings. And how have you been, Richard?"

"Ailing and wretched," answered Richard Hare. "How can I be otherwise, Mr. Carlyle, with so false an accusation attaching to me; and working like a slave, as I have to do?"

"You may take off that disfiguring hat, Richard. No one is here."

Richard slowly lifted it from his brows, and his fair face, so like his mother's, was disclosed. But the moment he was uncovered, he turned shrinkingly towards the door. "If any one should come in, sir!"

"Impossible," replied Mr. Carlyle. "The front door is fast, and the office is supposed to be empty at this hour."

"For, if I should be seen and recognized, it might come to hanging, you know, sir. You are expecting that accursed Thorn here, Barbara told me."

"Directly," replied Mr. Carlyle, observing the mode of addressing him: "sir." It told plainly of the scale of society in which Richard must be mixing: that he was with those who said it habitually; that he used it habitually himself. "From your description of the Lieutenant Thorn who destroyed Hallijohn, we believe this Captain Thorn to be the same man," pursued Mr. Carlyle. "In person he appears to tally exactly; and I have ascertained that some years ago he was a great deal at Swainson, and fell into some sort of scrape. He is in John Herbert's regiment, and is here with him on a visit."

"But what an idiot he must be to venture here!" uttered Richard. "Here, of all places in the world."

"He counts, no doubt, upon not being known. So far as I can find out, Richard; no one here knew him, except you and Afy. I shall put you in Mr. Dill's room --you may remember the little window in it--

and from thence you can take full view of Thorn, whom I shall keep in the front office. " You are sure you would recognize him, at this distance of time ? "

" I should know him if it were fifty years to come ; I should know him if he were disguised as I am disguised. We cannot," Richard sank his voice, " forget a man who has been the object of our frenzied jealousy."

" What has brought you to West Lynne again, Richard ? Any particular object ? "

" Chiefly a hankering within me that I could not get rid of," replied Richard. " It was not so much to see my mother and Barbara—though I have longed to see them since my illness—but a feeling was within me that I could not rest away from it. So I said I'd risk it again just for a day."

" I thought you might possibly want some assistance, as before."

" I do want that also," said Richard. " Not much. My illness has run me into debt, and if my mother can let me have a little I shall be thankful."

" I am sure she will," answered Mr. Carlyle. " You shall have it from me to-night. What has been the matter with you ? "

" The beginning of it was a kick from a horse, sir. That was last winter, and it laid me up for six weeks. Then, in the spring, after I had got well and was at work again, I caught some sort of fever, and down again I was for six weeks. I have not been to say well since."

" How is it you have never written, or sent me your address ? "

" Because I dare not," answered Richard, timidously. " I should always be in fear ; not of you, Mr. Carlyle, but of its becoming known in some way or other. The time is getting on, sir : is that Thorn sure to come ? "

" He sent me word that he would, in reply to my note. And—there he is ! " said Mr. Carlyle, as a ring was heard at the bell. " Now, Richard, come this way. Bring your hat."

Richard complied by putting the hat on his head, pulling it so low down that it almost touched his nose. He felt himself safer in it. Mr. Carlyle showed him into Mr. Dill's room, and then turned the key upon him, and put it into his pocket. Whether this precautionary measure was intended to prevent any possibility of Captain Thorn's finding his way in, or of Richard finding his way out, was best known to himself.

Mr. Carlyle went to the front door, opened it, and admitted Captain Thorn. He brought him into the clerks' office, which was bright with gas, keeping him in conversation for a few minutes standing, and then asking him to be seated : all in full view of the little window.

" I must beg your pardon for being late," Captain Thorn observed. " I am half an hour beyond the time you mentioned, but the Herberts had two or three friends at dinner, and I could not get away. I hope, Mr. Carlyle, you have not come to your office to-night purposely for me."

" Business must be attended to," somewhat evasively answered Mr. Carlyle : " I have been out myself nearly all day. We received a communication from London this morning relative to your affair,

and I am sorry to say it is anything but satisfactory. They will not wait."

"But I am not liable, Mr. Carlyle. Not liable in justice."

"No—if what you tell me be correct. But justice and law are sometimes opposed to each other, Captain Thorn."

Captain Thorn sat in perplexity. "They will not have me arrested here, will they?"

"They would have done it, beyond doubt; but I have caused a letter to be written and despatched to them, which must bring forth an answer before any violent proceedings are taken. That answer will be here the morning after to-morrow."

"And what am I to do then?"

"I think it probable there may be a way then of checkmating them. But I am not sure, Captain Thorn, that I can give my attention further to this affair."

"I hope and trust you will," was the reply.

"You have not forgotten that I told you, at first, I could not promise to do so," rejoined Mr. Carlyle. "You shall hear from me to-morrow. If I carry it on for you, I will then appoint an hour for you to be here the following day: if not—why, I dare say you will find a solicitor as capable of assisting you as I am."

"But why will you not? What is your reason?"

"I cannot always give reasons for what I do," was the response. "You shall hear from me to-morrow."

He rose as he spoke; Captain Thorn also rose. Mr. Carlyle detained him yet a few moments, and then saw him out at the front door and fastened it.

He returned and released Richard. The latter took off his hat as he advanced into the blaze of light.

"Well, Richard, is it the same man?"

"No, sir. Nor in the least like him."

Mr. Carlyle felt a strange relief; relief for Captain Thorn's sake. He had rarely seen one whom he could so little associate with the notion of a murderer as Captain Thorn, and he was a man who exceedingly won upon his regard. He could heartily help him out of his dilemma now.

"Excepting that they are both tall, with nearly the same coloured hair, there is no resemblance whatever between them," proceeded Richard. "Their faces, their figures are as opposite as light is from dark! That other, in spite of his handsome features, has the expression at times of a demon; but the expression of this one is the best part of his face. Hallijohn's murderer had a curious look here, sir."

"Where?" questioned Mr. Carlyle, for Richard had only pointed to his face generally.

"Well—I cannot say precisely where it lay, whether in the eyebrows or the eyes: I could not tell when I used to have him before me: but it was in one of them. Ah, Mr. Carlyle, I thought when Barbara told me Thorn was here, it was too good news to be true; depend upon it he won't venture to West Lynne again. This man is no more like that other villain than you are like him."

"Then—as that is set at rest—we had better be going, Richard.

You have to see your mother, and she must be waiting in anxiety. How much money do you want?"

"Twenty-five pounds would do, but——" Richard stopped in hesitation.

"But what?" asked Mr. Carlyle. "Speak out, Richard."

"Thirty would be more welcome. Thirty would put me at ease."

"You shall have thirty," said Mr. Carlyle, counting over the notes to him. "Now—will you walk with me to the grove, or will you walk alone? I mean to see you there in safety."

Richard thought he would prefer to walk alone: every one they met might be speaking to Mr. Carlyle. The latter inquired why he chose moonlight nights for his visits.

"It is pleasanter for night travelling. And, had I chosen dark nights, Barbara could not have seen my signal from the trees," was Richard's answer.

They went out, and proceeded unmolested to the house of Justice Hare. It was past nine then. "I am so much obliged to you, Mr. Carlyle," whispered Richard, as they walked up the path.

"I wish I could help you more effectually, Richard, and clear up the mystery. Is Barbara on the watch? Yes; the door is slowly opening."

Richard stole across the hall and into the parlour to his mother. Barbara approached and softly whispered to Mr. Carlyle, standing just outside the portico: her voice trembled with the suspense of what the answer might be.

"Is it the same man? The same Thorn?"

"No. Richard says this man bears no resemblance to the real one."

"Oh!" uttered Barbara, in her surprise and disappointment. "Not the same! and for the best part of poor Richard's evening to have been taken up for nothing."

"Not quite for nothing," said Mr. Carlyle. "The question is now set at rest."

"Set at rest!" repeated Barbara. "It is left in more uncertainty than ever."

"Set at rest as regards Captain Thorn. And whilst our suspicions were concentrated upon him, we did not look to other quarters."

When they entered the sitting-room, Mrs. Hare was crying over Richard, and Richard was crying over her: but she seized Mr. Carlyle's hand.

"You have been very kind. I don't know what we should do without you. And I want to tax your kindness yet further. Has Barbara mentioned it?"

"I could not talk in the hall, mamma: the servants might have overheard."

"Mr. Hare is not well, and we terribly fear he will be home early in consequence: otherwise we should have been quite safe until ten, for he is gone to the Buck's Head, and they never leave, you know, till that hour has struck. Should he come in and see Richard—the very thought sends me into a fever—Barbara and I have been discussing it all the evening, and we ~~have~~ ^{have} been thinking of one plan. It is, that you will kindly stay in the garden near the gate, and if he should be coming in, stop him and keep him in conversation. Barbara will ~~not~~ ^{not}

and will run in with the warning, and Richard can go inside the closet in the hall, till Mr. Hare has entered and is safe in this room, and then he can make his escape. Will you do this, Archibald?"

"Certainly I will."

"I cannot part with him before ten o'clock, unless I am obliged to do so," she whispered, pressing Mr. Carlyle's hands in her earnest gratitude. "You don't know what it is, Archibald, to have a lost son home for an hour but once in 'seyen years. At ten o'clock we will part."

Mr. Carlyle and Barbara began to pace the path, in compliance with the wishes of Mrs. Hare, keeping near the entrance gate. When they were turning the second time, Mr. Carlyle offered her his arm; it was an act of mere politeness. Barbara took it: and there they waited and waited, but the justice did not come.

Punctually to the minute, half after nine, Lady Isabel's carriage arrived at Mrs. Jeafferson's, and she came out immediately, a headache being the plea for her early departure. She had not far to go to reach East Lynne: only about two miles; it was a by-road nearly all the way. They could emerge into the open road if they pleased, but it was a little further. Suddenly a gentleman approached the carriage as it was bowling along, and waved his hand to the coachman to pull up. In spite of the moonlight, Lady Isabel did not at first recognize him, for he wore a disfiguring fur cap, the ears of which were tied over his ears and cheeks. It was Francis Levison. She put down the window.

"I thought it must be your carriage. How early you are returning! Were you tired of your entertainers?"

"Why, he knew what time my lady was returning," thought John to himself; "he asked me. A false sort of chap, that. I've a notion."

"I came out for a stroll, and have tired myself," he proceeded. "Will you take compassion on me and give me a seat home?"

She acquiesced; she could not well do otherwise. The footman sprang from behind, to open the door, and Francis Levison took his place beside Lady Isabel. "Take the high road," he put out his head to say to the coachman, and the man touched his hat. The high road would cause them to pass Mr. Hare's.

"I did not know you," she began, gathering herself into her own corner. "What ugly thing is that you have on? It is like a disguise."

He was taking off the "ugly thing" as she spoke, and began to twirl it round on his hand. "Disguise? Oh no; I have no creditors in the immediate neighborhood of East Lynne."

False as ever. It was worn as a disguise, and he knew it.

"Is Mr. Carlyle at home?" she inquired.

"No." Then after a pause—"I expect he is more agreeably engaged."

The tone brought the tingling blood to the cheeks of Lady Isabel. She wished to preserve a dignified silence; and did so for a few moments: but the jealous question broke out.

"Engaged in what manner?"

"As I came by Hare's house just ~~two~~ people, a gentleman and a young lady ~~were~~ ~~very~~ together, enjoying a tête-à-tête by ~~they~~ were your husband and Miss Hare."

Lady Isabel almost gnashed her teeth : the jealous doubts which had been tormenting her all the evening were confirmed. That the man whom she hated—yes, in her blind anger, she hated him then—should so impose upon her, should excuse himself by lies, lies base and false, from accompanying her, on purpose to pass the hours with Barbara Hare ! Had she been alone in the carriage, a torrent of passion had probably escaped her.

She leaned back, panting in her emotion, but concealed it from Captain Levison. As they came opposite to Justice Hare's, she deliberately bent forward, and scanned the garden with eager eyes.

There, in the bright moonlight, all too bright and clear, slowly paced, arm in arm, drawn close to each other, her husband and Barbara. With a choking sob, that could no longer be controlled or hidden, Lady Isabel sank back again.

He, that bold bad man, dared to put his arm round her ; to draw her to his side ; to whisper that *his* love was left her, if another's was withdrawn.

She was most assuredly out of her senses that night, or she never would have listened.

A jealous woman is mad ; an outraged woman is doubly mad ; and the ill-fated Lady Isabel truly believed that every sacred feeling which ought to exist between man and wife, was betrayed by Mr. Carlyle.

"Be avenged on that false hound, Isabel. He was never worthy of you. Leave your life of misery, and come to happiness."

In her bitter distress and wrath, she broke into a storm of sobs. Were they caused by passion against her husband, or by these bold and shameless words ! Alas ! alas ! Francis Levison applied himself to soothe her with all the sweet and dangerous sophistry of his crafty nature.

CHAPTER IX.

NEVER TO BE REDEEMED.

THE minutes flew on. A quarter to ten ; ten ; a quarter past ten ; and still Richard Hare lingered on with his mother, and still Mr. Carlyle and Barbara paced patiently the garden path. At half-past ten Richard came forth, having taken his last farewell. Then came Barbara's tearful farewell, which Mr. Carlyle witnessed ; then a hard grasp of that gentleman's hand, and Richard plunged into the trees, to depart the way he had come.

"Good night, Barbara," said Mr. Carlyle.

"Will you not come in, and say good night to mamma ?"

"Not now ; it is late. Tell her how glad I am things have gone off so well."

He set off at a rapid pace towards his home, and Barbara leaned on the gate to indulge her tears. Not a soul passed to interrupt her, and the justice did not return. What could have become of him ? What could the Buck's Head be thinking of, to detain respectable elderly justices from their beds, who ought to go home early and set a good example to

the parish? Barbara knew, the next day, that Justice Hare, with a few more gentlemen, had been seduced from the staid old inn to a friend's house, to an entertainment of supper, pipes, and whist, two tables, six-penny points, and it was between twelve and one ere the party rose from the fascination. So far, well—as it happened.

Barbara knew not how long she lingered at the gate; ten minutes it may have been. No one summoned her; Mrs. Hare was indulging her grief indoors, giving no thought to Barbara, and the justice did not make his appearance. Exceedingly surprised was Barbara to hear fast footsteps, and to find that they were Mr. Carlyle's.

"The more haste, the less speed, Barbara," he called out as he came up. "I had reached half way home, and have had to return again. When I went into your sitting-room, I left a small parcel, containing a parchment, on the sideboard. Will you find it for me?"

Barbara ran indoors and brought forth the parcel; and Mr. Carlyle, with a brief word of thanks, sped away with it.

She leaned on the gate as before, the ready tears flowing again. Her heart was aching for Richard: it was aching for the disappointment the night had brought forth respecting Captain Thorn. Still no one passed; still the steps of her father were not heard, and Barbara stayed on. But—what was that figure cowering under shadow of the hedge at a distance, and apparently watching her? Barbara strained her eyes, while her heart beat as if it would burst its bounds. Surely, surely, it was her brother! Why had he ventured there again?

It was Richard Hare. When fully assured that Barbara was standing there, he knew the justice must be still absent, and ventured to advance. He appeared to be in a strange state of emotion, his breath laboured, his whole frame trembling.

"Barbara! Barbara!" he ejaculated, "I have seen Thorn."

Barbara thought him demented. "I know you saw him," she slowly said; "but it was not the right Thorn."

"Not he," breathed Richard: "not the man I saw to-night in Carlyle's office. I have seen the fellow himself. Why do you stare so at me, Barbara?"

Barbara was in truth scanning his face keenly. It appeared to her a strange tale that he was telling.

"When I left here, I cut across into Bean-lane, which is more private for me than this road," proceeded Richard. "Just as I reached that clump of trees—you know it, Barbara—I saw somebody coming towards me, from a distance. I stepped back behind the trees, into the shade of the hedge, for I don't care to be seen, though I am disguised. He came along the middle of the lane, going towards West Lynne, and I looked out upon him. I knew him long before he came up: it was Thorn."

Barbara made no comment: she was digesting the news.

"Every drop of blood within me began to tingle, and an impulse came upon me to spring upon him and accuse him of the murder of Hallijohn," went on Richard, in the same excited manner. "But I restrained it: or, perhaps, my courage failed. One of the reproaches against me used to be that I was a physical coward, you know, Barbara," he added, his tone changing to bitterness. "In a struggle

Thorn would have had the best of it : he is taller and more powerful, than I, and might have battered me to death. A man who can commit one murder, won't hesitate at a second."

"Richard, do you think you could have been deceived ?" she urged. " You have been talking of Thorn, and your thoughts were, naturally, bearing upon him. Imagination——"

"Be still, Barbara !" he interrupted, in a tone of pain. "Imagination, indeed ! Did I not tell you he was stamped here ?" touching his breast. "Do you take me for a child, or an imbecile, that I should fancy I see Thorn in every shadow, or meet people where I do not ? He had his hat off as if he had been walking fast and was hot—he was walking fast, and he carried the hat in one hand, and what looked like a small parcel. With the other hand he was pushing his hair from his brow—in this way ; a peculiar way," added Richard, slightly lifting his own hat, and pushing back his hair. "By that action alone I should have known him, for he was always doing it in the old days. And there was his white hand, adorned with his diamond ring, Barbara, and the diamond glittered in the moonlight."

Richard's voice and manner were singularly earnest, and a conviction of the truth of his assertion flashed upon his sister.

"I saw his face as plainly as I ever saw it ; every feature : he is scarcely altered, except for a haggardness in his cheeks now. Barbara, you need not doubt me : I swear it was Thorn."

She grew excited as he was. Now that she believed the news, it was telling upon her : reason left its place, and impulse succeeded. Barbara did not wait to weigh her actions.

"Richard, Mr. Carlyle ought to know this. He has only just gone ; we may overtake him if we try."

Forgetting the strange appearance it would have, at that hour of the night, should she meet any one who knew her, forgetting what the consequences might be, should Justice Hare return and find her absent, Barbara set off with a fleet foot, Richard more stealthily following her, his eyes cast in all directions. Fortunately Barbara wore a bonnet and mantle, which she had put on to pace the garden with Mr. Carlyle ; fortunately also, they met no one. She succeeded in reaching Mr. Carlyle before he turned into the East Lynne gates.

"Barbara !" he exclaimed, in the extreme of astonishment. "Barbara !"

"Archibald ! Archibald !" she panted, gasping for breath. "I am not out of my mind ; but do come and speak to Richard ! He has just seen the real Thorn."

Mr. Carlyle, amazed and wondering, turned back. They passed over the stile nearly opposite the gates, drew behind the hedge, and there Richard told his tale. Mr. Carlyle did not appear to doubt it, as Barbara had done : perhaps he could not do so, in the face of Richard's agitated and intense earnestness.

"I am sure there is no one named Thorn in the neighbourhood, except the gentleman you saw in my office to-night, Richard," observed Mr. Carlyle, after some deliberation. "It is very strange."

"He may be staying here under a feigned name," replied Richard. "There can be no mistake that it is Thorn whom I have just met."

"How was he dressed? As a gentleman?"

"Catch him dressing as anything else," returned Richard. "He was in an evening suit, with a sort of thin overcoat thrown on, but it was flung back from the shoulders, and I distinctly saw his clothes. As I have told Barbara, I should have known him by this action of the hand," imitating it, "as he pushed his hair off his forehead: it was the delicate white hand of the days gone by, Mr. Carlyle, and the flashing diamond ring."

Mr. Carlyle was silent; Barbara also; but the thoughts of both were busy. "Richard," observed the former, "I should advise you to remain a day or two in the neighbourhood, and look out for this man. You may see him again, and may track him home; it is very desirable to find out who he really is, if it can be done."

"But the danger?" urged Richard.

"Your fears magnify that. I am quite certain that no one would know you in broad daylight, disguised as you are now. So many years have flown since, that people have forgotten to think about you, Richard."

But Richard could not be persuaded; he was full of fears. He described the man as accurately as he could to Mr. Carlyle and Barbara, and told them *they* must look out. With some trouble Mr. Carlyle drew from him an address in London to which he might write, in case anything turned up, and Richard's presence should be needed. He then once more said farewell, and quitted them, his way lying past East Lynne.

"And now to see you home again, Barbara," said Mr. Carlyle.

"Indeed you shall not do it, late as it is, and tired as you must be. I came here alone: Richard did not keep near me."

"I cannot help your having come here alone, but you may rely upon it I do not suffer you to go back so. Nonsense, Barbara! Allow you to go along the high road by yourself at eleven o'clock at night! What are you thinking of?"

He gave Barbara his arm, and they pursued their way. "How late Lady Isabel will think you!" observed Barbara.

"I do not know that Lady Isabel has yet returned home. My being late once in a way is of no consequence."

Not another word was spoken, except by Barbara. "What excuse can I make, should papa be at home again?" Both were buried in their own reflections. "Thank you very greatly," she said as they reached the gate, and Mr. Carlyle finally turned away. Barbara strolled in, and found the coast clear: her father had not arrived.

Lady Isabel was in her dressing-room when Mr. Carlyle entered; she was seated at a table, writing. A few questions as to her evening's visit, which she answered in the briefest manner possible, and then he asked her if she was not going to bed.

"By-and-by. I am not sleepy."

"I must go at once, Isabel, for I am dead tired."

"You can go," was her answer.

He bent down to kiss her, but she dexterously turned her face away. He supposed she felt hurt that he had not gone with her to the party, and placed his hand on her shoulder with a pleasant smile.

" You foolish child to be aggrieved at that ! It was no fault of mine, Isabel : I could not help myself. I will talk to you in the morning : I am too tired to-night. I suppose you will not be long."

Her head was bent over her writing again, and she made no reply. Mr. Carlyle went into the bedroom and closed the door. Some time after, Lady Isabel went softly upstairs to Joyce's room. Joyce, in her first sleep, was suddenly aroused from it. There stood her mistress, a waxlight in her hand. Joyce rubbed her eyes and collected her senscs, and finally sat up in bed.

" My lady ! Are you ill ? "

" Ill ? Yes ; and wretched," answered Lady Isabel : and ill she looked, for she was perfectly white. " Joyce, I want a promise from you. If anything should happen to me, remain at East Lynne with my children."

Joyce stared in amazement, too astonished to make any reply.

" Joyce, you promised it once before : promise it again. Whatever betide, you will remain with my children when I am gone."

" I will stay with them. But, oh, my lady, what can be the matter with you ? Are you taken suddenly ill ? "

" Good-bye, Joyce," murmured Lady Isabel, gliding from the chamber as softly as she had entered it. And Joyce, after an hour of perplexity, dropped asleep again.

Joyce was not the only one whose rest was disturbed that eventful night. Mr. Carlyle himself awoke, and to his surprise found that his wife had not come to bed. He wondered what the time was, and struck his repeater. A quarter-past three !

Rising, he made his way to the door of his wife's dressing-room. It was in darkness ; and so far as he could judge by absence of sound, unoccupied.

" Isabel."

No reply. Nothing but the echo of his own voicc in the silence of the night.

He struck a match and lighted a taper, partially dressed himself, and went out to look for her. He feared she might have been taken ill : or else that she had fallen asleep in one of the rooms. But nowhere could he find her, and, feeling perplexed, he proceeded to his sister's chamber door and knocked.

Miss Carlyle was a light sleeper, and rose up in bed at once. " Who's that ? " called out she.

" It is only I, Cornelia," said Mr. Carlyle.

" You ! " ejaculated Miss Corny. " What in the name of fortune do you want ? You can come in."

Mr. Carlyle opened the door, and met the keen eyes of his sister, bent on him from the bed. Her head was surmounted by a remarkable nightcap, at least a foot high.

" Is any one ill ? " she demanded.

" I think Isabel must be. I cannot find her."

" Not find her ! " echoed Miss Corny. " Why, what's the time ? Is she not in bed ? "

" It is three o'clock. She has not been to bed. I cannot find her in the sitting-rooms ; neither is she in the children's room."

"Then I'll tell you what it is, Archibald ; she's gone worrying after Joyce. Perhaps the girl may be in pain to-night."

Mr. Carlyle was in full retreat towards Joyce's room, at this suggestion, when his sister called to him.

"If anything is wrong with Joyce, come and tell me, Archibald, for I shall get up and see after her. The girl was my servant before she was your wife's."

He reached Joyce's room and softly unlatched the door, fully expecting to find a light there, and his wife sitting by the bedside. There was no light, however, except that which came from the taper he held, and he saw no signs of his wife. *Where* was she? Was it probable that Joyce could tell him? He stepped into the room and called to her.

Joyce started up in a fright, which changed to astonishment when she recognized her master. He inquired whether Lady Isabel had been there, and for a few moments Joyce did not answer. She had been dreaming of Lady Isabel, and could not at first detach the dream from the visit which had probably given rise to it.

"What did you say, sir? Is my lady worse?"

"I ask if she has been here. I cannot find her."

"Why, yes," said Joyce, now fully aroused. "She came here and woke me. That was just before twelve, for I heard the clock strike. She did not stay here a minute, sir."

"Woke you!" repeated Mr. Carlyle. "What did she want? what did she come here for?"

Thoughts are quick; imagination is quicker; and Joyce was giving the reins to both. Her mistress's gloomy and ambiguous words were crowding on her brain. Three o'clock! and she had not been in bed, and was not to be found in the house! A nameless horror struggled to Joyce's face, her eyes were dilating with it: she seized and threw on a large flannel gown which lay on a chair by the bed, and forgetful of her ailing foot, forgetful of her master who stood there, out she sprang to the floor. All minor considerations faded to insignificance beside the terrible dread which had taken possession of her. Clasping the flannel gown tightly round her with one hand, she laid the other on the arm of Mr. Carlyle.

"Oh, master, master! she has destroyed herself! I see it all now."

"Joyce!" sternly interrupted Mr. Carlyle.

"She has destroyed herself, sir, as true as that we two are living here!" persisted Joyce, her own face livid with emotion. "I can understand her words now; I could not before. She came here—and her face was like a corpse as the light fell upon it—saying she had come to get a promise from me to stay with her children when she was gone. I asked whether she was ill, and she answered, 'Yes, ill and wretched.' Oh, sir, may Heaven support you under this dreadful trial!"

Mr. Carlyle felt bewildered; perplexed. Not a syllable did he believe of this. He was not angry with Joyce, for he thought she had lost her reason.

"It is so, sir, incredible as you may deem my words," pursued Joyce, wringing her hands. "My lady has been miserably unhappy: and that has driven her to it."

"Joyce, are you in your senses or out of them?" demanded Mr. Carlyle, a certain sternness in his tone. "Your lady miserably unhappy! what do you mean by such an assertion?"

Before Joyce could answer, an addition was received to the company in the person of Miss Carlyle, who appeared in black stockings and a shawl, and the lofty nightcap. Hearing voices in Joyce's room, which was above her own, and full of curiosity, she ascended, not choosing to be shut out from the conference.

"Whatever's up?" cried she. "Is Lady Isabel found?"

"She is not found, and she never will be found but in her winding-sheet," returned Joyce, whose lamentable and unusual state of excitement completely overpowered her customary quiet respect and plain good sense. "And, ma'am, I am glad that you have come up; for what I was about to say to my master I would prefer to say in your presence. When my lady is brought into this house, and laid down before us, dead, what will your feelings be? My master has done his duty by her in love; but you—you have made her life a misery. Yes, ma'am, you have."

"Highty tighty!" uttered Miss Carlyle, staring at Joyce in consternation. "What is all this? Where's my lady?"

"She has gone and taken the life that was not hers to take," sobbed Joyce; "and I say she has been driven to it. She has not been allowed to indulge a will of her own, poor thing, since she came to East Lynne: in her own house she has been less free than any one of her servants. You have curbed her, ma'am, and snapped at her, and made her feel that she was but a slave to your caprices and temper. All these years she has been crossed and put upon; everything, in short, but beaten—ma'am, you know she has!—and she has borne it all in silence, like a patient angel, never, as I believe, complaining to my master: he can say whether she has or not. We all loved her, we all felt for her, and my master's heart would have bled, had he suspected what she had to put up with day after day, and year after year."

Miss Carlyle's tongue was glued to her mouth. Her brother, confounded at the rapid words, could scarcely gather in their sense.

"What is that you are saying, Joyce?" he asked, in a low tone. "I do not understand."

"I have longed to say it to you many a hundred times, sir: but it is right that you should hear it, now things have come to this dreadful ending. Since the very night Lady Isabel came home here, your wife, she has been taunted with the cost she has brought to East Lynne and to you. If she wanted but the simplest thing, she was forbidden to have it, and told that she was bringing her husband to poverty. For this very dinner party that she went to to-night, she wished for a new dress, and your cruel words, ma'am, forbade her having it. She ordered a new frock for Miss Isabel, and you commanded it. You have told her that master worked like a dog to support her extravagances, when you know that she never was extravagant: that none were less inclined to go beyond proper limits, than she. I have seen her, ma'am, come away from your ~~tear-gardens~~ with the tears in her eyes, and her hands meekly clasped upon her bosom, as though life was heavy to bear. A gentle-spirited, high-born lady, as

she was, could not fail to be driven to desperation ; and I know that she has been."

Mr. Carlyle turned to his sister. "Can this be true ?" he inquired, in a tone of deep agitation.

She did not answer. Whether it was the shade cast by the nightcap or the reflection of the wax taper, her face looked gray and ghostly : and for the first time probably in Miss Carlyle's life, words failed her.

" May God forgive you, Cornelius !" he murmured, as he went out of the chamber.

He descended to his own. That his wife had laid violent hands upon herself, his reason utterly repudiated : she was one of the least likely to commit so great a sin. He believed that, in her unhappiness, she might have wandered out in the grounds, and was lingering there. By this time the house was aroused, and the servants were astir. Joyce—surely a supernatural strength was given her, for though she had been able to put her foot to the ground, she had not yet walked upon it—crept downstairs, and went into Lady Isabel's dressing-room. Mr. Carlyle was hastily assuming the articles of attire he had not yet put on, to go out and search the grounds, when Joyce limped in, holding out a note. Joyce did not stand on ceremony that night.

" I found this in the dressing-glass drawer, sir. It is my lady's writing."

He took it in his hand and looked at the address. "Archibald Carlyle." Though a calm man, one who had his emotions under his own control, he was no stoic, and his fingers shook as he broke the seal.

" When years go on, and my children ask where their mother is, and why she left them, tell them that you, their father, goaded her to it. If they inquire *what* she is, tell them also, if so you will. But tell them at the same time that you outraged and betrayed her, driving her to the very depth of desperation, ere she quitted them in her despair."

The handwriting, his wife's, swam before the eyes of Mr. Carlyle. All, except the disgraceful fact that she had *flown*—and a horrible suspicion began to dawn upon him with whom—was totally incomprehensible. How had he outraged her? in what manner had he goaded her to it? The discomforts alluded to by Joyce, as the work of his sister, had evidently no part in this; yet, what had *he* done? He read the letter again, more slowly. No, he could not understand it: he had no clue to the mystery.

At that moment the voices of the servants in the corridor outside penetrated to his ears: of course they were peering about, and making their own comments, Wilson, with her long tongue, the busiest. They were saying that Captain Levison was not in his room; that his bed had not been slept in.

Joyce sat on the edge of a chair—she could not stand—watching her master with his blanched face: never had she seen him betray agitation so powerful. Not the faintest suspicion of the dreadful truth had yet dawed upon her. He walked to the door, the open note in his hand, then turned, wavered, and stood still—as if he did not know what he was doing. Probably he did not. Then he took out his

pocket-book, put the note inside it, and returned it to his pocket, his hands trembling equally with his livid lips.

" You need not mention this," he said to Joyce, indicating the note. " It concerns myself alone."

" Sir, does it say she's dead?"

" She is not dead," he answered. " Worse than that," he added in his heart.

" Why—who is this?" uttered Joyce.

It was little Isabel, stealing in with a frightened face, in her white nightgown. The commotion had aroused her.

" What is the matter?" she asked. " Where's mamma?"

" Child, you'll catch your death of cold," said Joyce. " Go back to bed."

" But I want mamma."

" In the morning, dear," evasively returned Joyce. " Sir, please, must not Miss Isabel go back to bed?"

Mr. Carlyle made no reply to the question; most likely he never heard it. But he touched Isabel's shoulder to draw Joyce's attention to the child.

" Joyce—Miss Lucy, in future."

He left the room, and Joyce remained silent from amazement. She heard him go out at the hall door and bang it after him. Isabel—nay, we must say " Lucy" also—went and stood outside the chamber door: the servants, gathered in a group, did not observe her. Presently she came running back again, and disturbed Joyce from her reverie.

" Joyce, is it true?"

" Is what true, my dear?"

" They are saying that Captain Levison has taken away mamma."

Joyce fell back in her chair, with a scream. It changed to a long, low moan of anguish.

" What has he taken her for?—to kill her? I thought it was only kidnappers who took people."

" Child, child, go to bed!"

" Oh, Joyce, I want mamma! When will she come back?"

Joyce hid her face in her hands to conceal its emotion from the motherless child. And just then Miss Carlyle entered on tiptoe and humbly sat down on a low chair, her face, in its grief, its remorse, and its horror, looking nearly as dark as her stockings.

She broke out into a subdued wail.

" God be merciful to this dishonoured house!"

Mr. Justice Hare turned into his gate between twelve and one; turned in with a jaunty air: for the justice was in spirits, having won nine sixpences, and his friend's tap of ale had been unusually good. When he reached his bedroom, he told Mrs. Hare of a chaise and four which had gone tearing past at a furious pace as he was closing the gate, coming from the direction of East Lynne. He wondered where it could be going at that midnight hour, and whom it contained.

CHAPTER X.

CHARMING RESULTS.

NEARLY a year went by.

Lady Isabel Carlyle had spent it on the Continent—that refuge for such fugitives—now removing about from place to place with her companion, now stationary and alone. Half the time—taking one absence with another—he had been away from her, chiefly in Paris, pursuing his own course and his own pleasure.

How fared it with Lady Isabel? Just as it must be expected to fare, and does fare, when a high-principled gentlewoman falls from her pedestal. Never had she experienced a moment's calm, or peace, or happiness, since the fatal night of quitting her home. She had taken a blind leap in a moment of wild passion; when, instead of the garden of roses it had been her persuader's pleasure to promise her (but which, in truth, she had barely glanced at, for that had not been her moving motive), she had found herself plunged into an abyss of horror, from which there was never more any escape; never more, never more. The very hour of her departure she awoke to what she had done: the guilt, whose aspect had been shunned in prospective, assumed at once its true, frightful colour, the blackness of darkness; and a lively remorse, a never-dying anguish, took possession of her soul for ever. Oh, reader, believe me! Lady—wife—mother! should you ever be tempted to abandon your home, so will you awaken! Whatever trials may be the lot of your married life, though they may magnify themselves to your crushed spirit as beyond the endurance of woman to bear, *resolve* to bear them; fall down upon your knees and pray to be enabled to bear them: pray for patience; pray for strength to resist the demon that would urge you so to escape; bear unto death, rather than forfeit your fair name and your good conscience; for be assured that the alternative, if you rush on to it, will be found far worse than death!

Poor thing! poor Lady Isabel! She had sacrificed husband, children, reputation, home, all that makes life of value to woman; she had forfeited her duty to God, had deliberately broken His commandments, for the one poor miserable sake of flying with Francis Levison. But, the instant the step was irrevocable, the instant she had passed the barrier, repentance set in. Even in the first days of her departure, in the fleeting moments of abandonment, when it may be supposed she might momentarily forget conscience, it was sharply wounding her with its adder-like stings: and she knew that her whole future existence, whether spent with that man or without him, would be one dark course of gnawing, never-ending retribution.

It is possible remorse does not come to all erring wives so immediately as it came to Lady Isabel Carlyle—you need not be reminded that we speak of women in the higher positions of life. Lady Isabel was endowed with sensitively refined delicacy, with an innate, lively consciousness of right and wrong: a nature, such as hers, is one of the

last that may be expected to err ; and, but for that most fatal misapprehension regarding her husband, the jealous belief, fanned by Captain Levison, that his love was given to Barbara Hare, and that the two were uniting to deceive her, she would never have forgotten herself. The haunting skeleton of remorse had taken up his lodging within her ; a skeleton of living fire, that must prey upon her heart-strings for ever. Every taunt to be cast upon her by the world, every slight that would henceforth be her portion, for she had earned it, must tell but too surely upon her crushed spirit.

Nearly a year went by ; all but some six or eight weeks ; when one morning in July, Lady Isabel made her appearance in the breakfast-room. They were staying now at Grenoble. Taking that town on their way from Switzerland, through Savoy, it had been Captain Levison's pleasure to halt there. He engaged furnished apartments in the vicinity of the Place Grenette ; it was a windy old house, full of doors and windows, chimneys and cupboards ; and there he said he should remain. Lady Isabel remonstrated ; she wished to go farther on, where they might receive quicker news from England ; but her will now was as nothing. She looked like the ghost of her former self. If you thought that she looked ill when she took that voyage over the water with Mr. Carlyle, you should have seen her now : misery marks the countenance far more than sickness. Her face was white and worn, her hands were thin, her eyes were sunken and surrounded by a black circle ; care was digging hollows for them. A stranger might have attributed these signs to her state of health ; she knew better ; knew that they were the effects of her wretched mind and heart.

It was very late for breakfast : but why should she rise early, only to drag through another endless day ? Languidly she took her seat at the table, just as Captain Levison's servant, a Frenchman, whom he had engaged in Paris, entered the room with two letters.

"Point de gazette, Pierre ?" she asked.

"Non, miladi."

And all the while the sly fox had the *Times* in his coat-pocket ! But he was only obeying the orders of his master. It had been Captain Levison's recent pleasure that the newspapers should not be seen by Lady Isabel until he had looked over them. You will speedily learn his motive.

Pierre departed towards Captain Levison's room, and Lady Isabel took up the letters and examined their superscription with interest. It was known to her that Mr. Carlyle had not lost a moment in seeking a divorce, and the announcement, that it was granted, was now daily expected. She was anxious for it ; anxious that Captain Levison should render her the only reparation in his power, before the birth of her child : she little knew that there was not the least intention on his part to make her reparation—any more than he had made it to others who had gone before her. She had become painfully aware of the fact that the man for whom she had sacrificed herself, was bad ; but she had not learned all his badness yet.

Captain Levison, unwashed, unshaven, a dressing-gown loosely slung on, lounged in to breakfast ; these decked-out dandies before the world are frequently the greatest slovens in domestic privacy. He wished

her good morning in a careless tone of apathy, and she as apathetically answered to it.

"Pierre says there are some letters," he began. "What a precious hot day it is!"

"Two," was her short reply, her tone sullen as his. For, if you think, my good reader, that the flattering words, the ardent expressions which usually attend the beginning of those promising unions, last out a whole ten months, you are in egregious error. Compliments, the very opposite to honey and sweetness, have generally set in long before.

"Two letters," she continued; "and they are both in the same handwriting: your solicitor's, I believe."

Up went his head at the last word, and he made a snatch at the letters; stalked to the farthest window, opened one, and glanced over its contents.

"SIR,—We beg to inform you that the suit, Carlyle *v.* Carlyle, is at an end: the divorce was pronounced without opposition. According to your request, we hasten to forward you the earliest intimation of the fact.

"We are, sir, faithfully yours,

"F. Levison, Esq."

"MOSS & GRAB."

It was over, then. And all claim to the name of Carlyle was declared to have been forfeited by the Lady Isabel for ever. Captain Levison folded up the letter, and placed it securely in an inner pocket.

"Is there any news?" she asked.

"News!"

"Of the divorce, I mean."

"Tush!" was the response of Captain Levison, as if wishing to imply that the divorce was yet a far-off affair: and he proceeded to open the other letter.

"SIR,—After sending off our last, dated to-day, we received tidings of the demise of Sir Peter Levison, your great-uncle. He expired this afternoon in town, where he had come for the benefit of medical advice. We have much pleasure in congratulating you upon your accession to the title and estates: and beg to state that should it not be convenient to you to visit England at present, we shall be happy to transact all necessary matters for you, on your favouring us with instructions.

"And we remain, sir, most faithfully yours,

"Sir Francis Levison, Bart."

"MOSS & GRAB."

The letter was superscribed as the other, "F. Levison, Esquire;" no doubt with a view to its more certain delivery.

"At last! thank the gods!" was the gentleman's euphonious expression, as he tossed the letter open upon the breakfast-table.

"The divorce is grafted!" feverishly uttered Lady Isabel.

He made no reply, but seated himself to breakfast.

"May I read the letter? Is it for me to read?"

"For what else should I have thrown it there?" he said.

"A few days ago, you placed a letter, open, upon the table; as I thought, for me: but when I took it up you swore at me. Do you remember it, Captain Levison?"

"You may drop that odious title, Isabel, which has stuck to me all too long. I own a better one now."

"What is it, pray?"

"You can look, and see."

Lady Isabel took up the letter and read it. Sir Francis swallowed his coffee, and rang the hand-bell—the only bell you generally meet with in France. Pierre answered it.

"Put me up a change of things," said he, in French. "I start for England in an hour."

"It was very well," Pierre responded: and departed to do it. Lady Isabel waited till the man was gone, and then spoke, a faint flush of emotion appearing in her cheeks.

"You do not mean what you say? You will not leave me yet?"

"I cannot do otherwise," he answered. "There's a mountain of business to be attended to, now that I have come into power."

"Moss and Grab say they will act for you. Had there been a necessity for your going they would not have offered to do so."

"Ay, they say so—with an eye to feathering their pockets! Go to England I must: it is absolutely essential. Besides, I should not choose the old man's funeral to take place without me."

"Then I must accompany you," she urged.

"I wish you would not talk nonsense, Isabel. Are you in a state to travel night and day? Neither would England be agreeable to you at present."

She felt the force of the objections: resuming, after a moment's pause. "Were you to go to England, you might not be back in time."

"In time for what?"

"Oh, how can you ask?" she rejoined in a sharp tone of reproach; "you know too well. In time to make me your wife when the divorce shall appear."

"I must chance it," coolly observed Sir Francis.

"Chance it! *change* the legitimacy of the child? You must assure that, before all things. More terrible to me than all the rest would it be, if——"

"Now, don't put yourself into a fever, Isabel. How many times am I to be compelled to beg that of you? It does no good. Is it my fault if I am called suddenly to England?"

"Have you no pity for your child?" she urged, in agitation. "Nothing can repair the injury, if you once suffer it to come upon him. He will be a byword amidst men throughout his life."

"You had better have written to the law lords to urge on the divorce," he retorted. "I cannot help the delay."

"There has been no delay: quite the contrary. But it may be expected hourly now."

"You are worrying yourself for nothing, Isabel. I shall be back in time."

He quitted the room as he spoke, and Lady Isabel remained in it, the image of despair. Nearly an hour passed, when she remembered

the breakfast things, and rang for them to be removed. A maid-servant entered, and she thought how ill miladi looked.

"Where was Pierre?" miladi asked.

"Pierre was making himself ready to attend monsieur to England."

Scarcely had she closed the door upon herself and her tray when Sir Francis Levison appeared, equipped for travelling. "Good-bye, Isabel," said he, without further circumlocution or ceremony,

Lady Isabel, excited beyond all self-control, slipped the bolt of the door; and, half leaning against it, half kneeling at his feet, held up her hands in supplication.

"Francis, have you any consideration left for me—any in the world?"

"How can you be so absurd, Isabel? Of course I have," he continued, in a peevish though kind tone, as he took her hands to raise her.

"No, not yet. I will remain here until you say you will wait another day or two. You know that the French Protestant minister is prepared to marry us, the instant news of the divorce shall arrive: if you do care still for me, you will wait."

"I cannot wait," he replied, his tone changing to one of determination. "It is useless to urge it."

"Say that you will not."

"Well, then, I will not; if you would prefer to have it so: anything to please you. Isabel, you are like a child. I shall be back in time."

"Do not think I am urging it for my sake," she panted, growing more agitated with every fleeting moment. "You know that I am not. I do not care what becomes of me. No; you shall not go till you hear me! Oh, Francis, by all I have forfeited for your sake——"

"Get up, Isabel," he interrupted.

"For the child's sake! for the child's sake. A whole long life before it; never to hold up its head, of right; the reproach everlasting upon it that it was born in sin! Francis! Francis! if you have no pity for me, have pity upon it!"

"I think you are losing your senses, Isabel! There's a month yet, and I promise you to be back ere it shall have elapsed. Nay, ere half of it shall have elapsed: a week will accomplish all I want to do in London. Let me pass, you have my promise, and I will keep it."

She never moved; only stood where she was, raising her supplicating hands. He grew impatient, and by some dexterous sleight of hand got the door open. She seized his arm.

"Not for my sake," she panted still, her dry lips drawn and livid.

"Nonsense about 'not for your sake.' It is for your sake that I will keep my promise. I *must* go. There: good-bye, Isabel, and take care of yourself."

He broke from her and left the room, and in another minute had left the house, Pierre attending him. A feeling, amounting to a conviction, rushed over the unhappy lady, that she had seen him for the last time until it should be too late.

She was right. It was too late by weeks and months.

CHAPTER XI.

MUTUAL COMPLIMENTS.

DECEMBER came in. The Alps were covered with snow ; Grenoble borrowed the shade, and looked cold and white, and sleety and sloppy ; the wide gutters which run through the middle of certain of the streets, were unusually black, and people crept along, cold and very dismal. Close to the fire, in the barn of a French bedroom, full of windows, and doors, and draughts, with its wide hearth and its wide chimney, shivered Lady Isabel Vane. She wore an invalid's cap, and a thick woollen shawl, and she shook and shivered constantly ; though she had drawn so close to the wood fire that there was danger of her dress igniting, and the attendant had frequently to spring up and interpose between it and the crackling logs. Little did it seem to matter to Lady Isabel : she sat in one position, her countenance the picture of stony despair.

So had she sat, so looked, since she began to grow better. She had had a long illness, terminating in low fever ; but the attendants whispered amongst themselves that miladi would soon get about if she would only rouse herself. She had so far done so as to sit up in the windy chamber ; and it seemed to be to her a matter of perfect indifference whether she ever went out of it or not.

This day she had taken her early dinner—such as it was, for appetite failed her—and had dozed in the arm-chair, when a noise arose from below, as of a carriage driving into the court-yard through the porte-cochère. It instantly aroused her. Had he come ?

"Who is it ?" she asked of the nurse.

"Miladi, it is monsieur : and Pierre is with him. I have begged miladi often and often not to fret, for that monsieur would surely come : and miladi sees I am right."

A strangely firm expression, speaking of severe resolution, overspread the face of Lady Isabel. It would seem to say that she had not "fretted" much after him who had now arrived ; or, at any rate, that she was not fretting after him now. "Patience and calmness !" she murmured to herself. "Oh, may they not desert me, now the time has come !"

"Monsieur looks so well !" proclaimed the maid, who had taken up her station at a window that overlooked the court-yard. "He has got out of the carriage : he is shaking himself and stamping his feet."

"You may leave the room, Susanne," said Lady Isabel.

"But if the baby wakes, miladi ?"

"I will ring."

The girl departed, closing the door, and Lady Isabel sat looking at it, schooling herself to patience. Another moment and it was flung open.

Sir Francis Leviton approached to greet her as he came in. She waved him off, begging him, in a subdued, quiet tone, not to draw too near, as any little excitement made her faint now. He took a seat opposite to her, and began pushing the logs together with his boot, as he explained that he really could not get away from town before.

"Why did you come now?" she quietly rejoined.

"Why did I come?" repeated he. "Are these all the thanks a fellow-gent for travelling in this inclement weather? I thought you would at least have been glad to welcome me, Isabel."

"Sir Francis," she rejoined, speaking still with almost unnatural calmness, as she continued to do throughout the interview—though the frequent changes in her countenance, and the movement of her hands, when she laid them from time to time on her chest to keep down its beating, told what an effort the struggle cost her—"Sir Francis, I am glad, for one reason, to welcome you: we must come to an understanding one with the other; and, so far, I am pleased that you are here. It was my intention to have communicated with you by letter as soon as I found myself capable of exertion, but your visit has removed the necessity. I wish to deal with you quite unreservedly, without concealment or deceit: I must request you so to deal with me."

"What do you mean by 'deal'?" he asked, settling the logs to his apparent satisfaction.

"To speak and act. Let there be plain truth between us at this interview, if there never has been before."

"I don't understand you."

"Naked truth, unglossed," she pursued, bending her eyes determinedly upon him. "It *must* be."

"With all my heart," returned Sir Francis. "It is you who have thrown out the challenge, mind."

"When you left in July you gave me a sacred promise to come back in time for our marriage: you know what I mean when I say 'in time': but——"

"Of course I meant to do so when I gave the promise," he interrupted. "But no sooner had I set foot in London than I found myself overwhelmed with business, and away from it I could not get. Even now I can only remain with you a couple of days, for I must hasten back to town."

"You are breaking faith already," she said, after hearing him calmly to the end. "Your words are not words of truth, but of deceit. You did not intend to be back in time for the marriage; or, otherwise, you would have caused it to take place ere you went at all."

"What fancies you take up!" uttered Francis Levison.

"Some time subsequent to your departure," she quietly went on, "one of the maids was setting to rights the clothes in your dressing-closet, and she brought me a letter she found in one of the pockets. I saw, by the date, that it was one of those two you received on the morning of your departure. It contained the information that the divorce was pronounced."

She spoke so quietly, so apparently without feeling or passion, that Sir Francis was agreeably astonished. He should have less trouble in throwing off the mask. But he was an ill-tempered man; and, to hear that the letter had been found, to have the falseness of his fine protestations and promises so effectually laid bare, did not improve his temper now. Lady Isabel continued:

"It had been better to have undeceived me then; to have told me

that the hopes I was cherishing for the sake of the widow child, were worse than vain."

"I did not judge so," he replied. "The ~~decided~~ state you then appeared to be in, would have precluded your listening to any sort of reason."

Her heart beat a little quicker : but she stilled it.

" You deem that it was not in reason I should aspire to be made the wife of Sir Francis Levison?"

He rose and began kicking at the logs, with the heel of his boot this time. " Well, Isabel—you must be aware that it is an awful sacrifice for a man in my position to marry a divorced woman."

The hectic flushed into her thin cheeks, but her voice sounded calm as before

" When I expected, or wished, for the 'sacrifice,' it was not for my own sake : I told you so then. But it was not made · and the child's inheritance is that of sin and shame. There he lies."

Sir Francis half turned to where she pointed, and saw an infant's cradle by the side of the bed. He did not take the trouble to go to look at it.

" I am the representative now of an ancient baronetcy," he resumed, in a tone as of apology for his previous heartless words, " and to make you my wife would so offend all my family, that——"

" Stay," interrupted Lady Isabel, " you need not trouble yourself to find needless excuses. Had you taken this journey for the purpose of making me your wife, were you to propose to do so this day, and bring a clergyman into the room to perform the ceremony, it would be futile. The injury to the child can never be repaired and, for myself, I cannot imagine any worse fate in life than being compelled to pass it with you."

" If you have taken this aversion to me it cannot be helped," he coolly said ; inwardly congratulating himself at being spared the trouble he had anticipated. " You made commotion enough once, about my making you 'reparation'"

She shook her head. " All the reputation in your power to make, all the reputation that the whole world can invent, could not undo my sin. It, and its effects, must lie upon me for ever."

" Oh—sin!" was the decisive exclamation. " You ladies should think of that beforehand."

" Yes," she sadly answered. " May Heaven help all to do so—who may be tempted as I was"

" If you mean that as a reproach to me, it's rather out of place," chafed Sir Francis, whose fits of ill temper were under no control, and who never, when in them, cared what he said to outrage the feelings of another. " The temptation to sin, as you call it, lay not in my persuasions, half so much as in your jealous anger towards your husband."

" Quite true," was her reply.

" And I believe you were on the wrong scent, Isabel—if it will be any satisfaction to you to hear it. Since we are mutually on this complimentary discourse, it is useless to smooth over facts."

" I do not understand what you would imply," she said, drawing her shawl round her with a fresh shiver. " How on the wrong scent?"

"With regard to your husband and that Hare girl. You were blindly, outrageously jealous of him."

"Go on."

"And I say I think you were on the wrong scent. I do not believe Carlyle ever thought of the girl—in that way."

"What do you mean?" she gasped.

"They had a secret between them. Not of love. A secret of business: and those interviews they had together, her dancing attendance upon him everlastingly, related to that; and to that alone."

Her face was more flushed than it had been throughout the interview. He spoke quietly now, quite in an equable tone of reasoning: it was his way when his ill temper was upon him; and the calmer he spoke, the more cutting were his words. He *need* not have told her this.

"What was the secret?" she inquired in a low tone.

"Nay, I can't explain all; they did not take me into their confidence. They did not even take you: better, perhaps, that they had, though, as things have turned out—or seem to be turning. There's some disreputable secret attaching to the Hare family, and Carlyle was acting in it for Mrs. Hare. She could not seek out Carlyle herself, so she sent the young lady. That's all I knew."

"How did you know it?"

"I had reason to think so."

"What reason? I must request you to tell me."

"I overheard scraps of their conversation now and then in those meetings, and so gathered my conclusions."

"You told a different tale to me, Sir Francis," was her remark, as she lifted her indignant eyes towards him.

Sir Francis laughed. "All stratagems are fair in love and war."

She dared not immediately trust herself to reply, and a silence ensued. Sir Francis broke it, pointing with his left thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the cradle.

"What have you named that young article there?"

"The name which ought to have been his by inheritance: 'Francis Levison,'" was her icy answer.

"Let's see—how old is he now?"

"He was born the last day of August."

Sir Francis threw up his arms and stretched himself, as if a fit of idleness had overtaken him; then advanced to the cradle and pulled down the clothes.

"Who is he like, Isabel? My handsome self?"

"Were he like you—in spirit—I would pray that he might die, ere he could speak or think," she burst forth; and then, remembering the resolution she had marked out for herself, subsided outwardly into calmness again.

"What else?" retorted Sir Francis. "You know my disposition pretty well by this time, Isabel, and may be sure that if you deal out small change to me, you will get it back again with interest."

She made no reply. Sir Francis put the clothes again over the sleeping child, returned to the fire and stood a few moments with his back to it.

"Is my room prepared for me, do you know?" he presently asked...

"No, it is not," she quietly rejoined. "These apartments are mine now: they have been transferred into my name, and they can never again afford you accommodation. Will you be so obliging—I am not strong—as to hand me that writing-case?"

Sir Francis walked to the table she indicated, which was at the far end of the great barn of a room; and, taking the writing-case from it, gave it to her.

She reached her keys from the stand at her elbow, unlocked the case, and took from it some bank-notes.

"I received these from you a month ago," she said. "They came by post."

"And you never had the grace to acknowledge them," he returned, in a sort of mock-reproachful tone.

"Forty pounds. That was the amount, was it?"

"I believe so."

"Allow me to return them to you. Count them."

"Return them to me—why!" inquired Sir Francis in amazement.

"I have no longer anything whatever to do with you, in any way. Do not make my arm ache, holding out the notes to you so long! Take them!"

Sir Francis took the notes from her hand and placed them on the stand near to her.

"If it be your wish that all relations should end between us, why, let it be so," he said. "I must confess I think it may be the wisest course, as things have come to this pass, for the cat-and-dog life, which would seemingly be ours, is not agreeable. Remember, that it is your doing; not mine. But you cannot think I am going to see you starve, Isabel. A sum—we will fix upon its amount amicably—shall be placed to your credit half yearly, and——"

"I beg of you to cease!" she passionately interrupted. "What do you take me for?"

"Take you for! Why, how can you live? You have no fortune; you must receive assistance from some one."

"I will not receive it from you. If the whole world denied me, and I could find no help from strangers, or means of earning my own bread, and it was necessary that I should still exist, I would apply to my husband for means, rather than to you. This ought to convince you that the topic may cease."

"Your husband?" sarcastically rejoined Sir Francis. "Generous man!"

A flush, deep and painful, dyed her cheeks. "I should have said my late husband. You need not have reminded me of the mistake."

"If you will accept nothing for yourself, you must for the child. He, at any rate, falls to my share. I shall give you a few hundreds a year with him."

She beat her hands before her, as if beating off the man and his words. "Not a f---ing, now or ever: were you to attempt to send money for him, I would throw it into the nearest river. Whom do you take me for?—what do you take me for?" she repeated, rising in her bitter mortification. "If you have put me beyond the pale of the world, I am still Lord Mount Severn's daughter."

" You did as much towards putting yourself beyond its pale, as——"

" Do I not know it? Have I not said so?" she sharply interrupted. And then she sat, striving to calm herself, clasping together her shaking hands.

" Well, if you will persist in this perverse resolution, I cannot mend it," resumed Sir Francis. " In a little time you may probably wish to recall it: in which case, a line, addressed to me at my bankers', will——"

Lady Isabel drew herself up. " Put away these notes, if you please," she interrupted, not allowing him to finish his sentence.

He took out his pocket-book, and placed the bank-notes within it.

" Your clothes—those you left here when you went to England—you will have the goodness to order Pierre to take away this afternoon. And now, Sir Francis, I believe that is all: we will part."

" To remain mortal enemies from henceforth?" he rejoined. " Is that to be it?"

" To be strangers," she replied, correcting him. " I wish you a good day."

" So! you will not even shake hands with me, Isabel!"

" I would prefer not."

And thus they parted. Sir Francis left the room, but not immediately the house. He went into a distant apartment, and, calling the servants before him—there were only two—gave them each a year's wages in advance. " That they might not have to trouble miladi for money," he said to them. Then he paid a visit to the landlord, and handed him likewise a year's rent in advance, making the same remark. After that, he ordered dinner at an hotel, and the same night he and Pierre departed on their journey home again, Sir Francis thanking his lucky star that he had so easily got rid of a vexatious annoyance.

And Lady Isabel? She passed her evening alone, sitting in the same place, close to the fire and the embers. The attendant remonstrated that miladi was remaining up too late for her strength; but miladi ordered her and her remonstrance into an adjoining room.

Never had her repentance been more keenly vivid to her than it was that evening; never had her position, present and future, loomed out in blacker colours. The facts of her hideous case stood before her, naked and bare. She had wilfully abandoned her husband, her children, her home; she had cast away her good name and her position; and she had deliberately offended God. What had she gained in return? What was she? A poor outcast; one of those whom men pity, and whom women shrink from; a miserable, friendless creature, who had henceforth to earn the bread she, and the other life dependent on her, must eat, the clothes they must wear, the roof that must cover them, the fuel they must burn. She had a few valuable jewels, her mother's or her father's gifts, which she had brought away from East Lynne: she had brought no others; nothing given to her by Mr. Carlyle: and these she now intended to dispose of, and live upon until they were gone. The proceeds, with strict economy, might last her some twelve or eighteen months she calculated: after that she must find out some means of supply for the future. Put the child out to

nurse, conceal her name, and go out as governess in a French or German family, was one of her visions in prospective.

A confused idea of revenge had been in her mind, urging her on to desperation, the night she quitted her home, of revenge on Mr. Carlyle for his supposed conduct to her. But what revenge had the step really brought to her heart? As her eyes opened to her folly and to the true character of Francis Levison, so in proportion did they close to the fault by which her husband had offended her. She saw it in fainter colours; she began to suspect—nay, she knew—that her own excited feelings had magnified it in length, breadth, and height—had made a molehill into a mountain: and, long before the scandal of her act had died away in the mouths of men, and Mr. Carlyle had legally put her from him, she had repented of the false step for her husband's sake, and longed—though it could never be—to be back again, his wife. She remembered his noble qualities; doubly noble did they appear to her, now that her interest in them must cease; she remembered how happy they had been together, except for her own self-torment touching Barbara Hare; and, worse than all, her esteem, her admiration, her affection for him, had returned to her fourfold. We never know the full value of a thing until we lose it. Health, prosperity, happiness, a peaceful conscience; what think we of these blessings while they are ours? But, when we lose them, we look back in surprise at our ungrateful apathy. A friend may be very dear; but we don't know how dear until he is gone: let him depart for ever, and the sorrow is almost greater than we can bear. She had lost Mr. Carlyle, and by her own act she had thrown him from her; and now she must make the best of her work, spending her whole future life probably in one long yearning for him and for her children. The hint thrown out by Sir Francis that afternoon, that her suspicions had been mistaken, that her jealousy had had no foundation, did not tend to mitigate her repentance. Whether he was right or wrong in his opinion, she did not know; but she dwelt upon it much: it was possible Sir Francis had merely said it to provoke her, for she knew his temper, and that he would be capable of doing so; but, if right, what an utterly blind fool she had been!

Her recent and depressing illness, the conviction of Sir Francis Levison's complete worthlessness, the terrible position in which she found herself, had brought to Lady Isabel *reflection*. Not the reflection, so called, that may come to us who yet live in and for the world, but that which must, almost of necessity, attend one whose part in the world is over, who has no interest left between this and the next. A conviction of her sin ever oppressed her; not only of the one act of it, patent to scandalmongers, but of the long sinful life she had led from childhood; sinful, insomuch as that it had been carelessly indifferent. When thoughts of the future life, and the necessity of preparing for it, had occasionally come over her—there are odd moments when they come over even the worst of us—she had been content to leave it to an indefinite future; possibly to a deathbed repentance. But now the truth had begun to dawn upon her, and was growing more clear day by day.

She leaned her aching head this night and dwelt upon these thoughts.

She stretched out her wasted hand for a book, which she had rarely used to look into, save at stated times and periods, and more as a forced duty than with any other feeling. Opening it at a certain chapter, she read some verses at its commencement; she had read them often lately; for she had begun to hope that the same merciful tidings might be vouchsafed to her troubled spirit; "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

There was much to be blotted out; a whole life of apathy and errors and sinfulness. Her future days, spent in repentance, could they atone for the past? She hunted out some other words, though she did not know in what part they might be: "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross daily, and follow me." What a cross was hers to take up! But she must do it; she would do it, by God's blessing—ah! had she got so far as to ask *that*? She would take it up from henceforth daily and hourly, and bear it as she best might: she had fully earned all its weight and its sharp pain, and must not shrink from her burden. That night, for the first time, a momentary vision floated before her mind's eye; a far, far off, indistinct vision of the shame and remorse and sorrow of her breaking heart giving place to something like peace.

Susanne was called at last. Susanne was sleepy and cross. Miladi surely could not know that the clock of Notre-Dame had gone midnight: and—well! if there wasn't miladi's arrowroot cold as ice and good for nothing! Miladi wanted to go into her grave, that was a fact.

Miladi replied that she only wanted at present to go into her bed, if Susanne would undress her. Susanne applied herself to the task, indulging in sundry scraps of gossip the while: Susanne and her fellow-servant having had their curiosity uncommonly whetted that day.

A very miserable affair it must be, that monsieur should have had to go back as soon as he came! All those many miles, over those cold wretched roads, behind a shrieking steam-engine, and across that abominable sea! She, once upon a time, when she was living with a family in Paris, had had leave to go down by one of those Sunday excursions to Dieppe, and she was asked to go upon the sea when she got there, and the wicked Fates put it into her poor ignorant heart to say "Yes." Ah, dame! she should never forget it! It spoiled still the best supper ever put before her, when she thought of it. Let it be fromage de cochon and a glass of vin de Bordeaux, or any other choice luxuries miladi might please to picture, not a bit of appetite had she, if those dreadful three hours on the pitching sea rose up in her mind. And she could hear yet her own groans, and see the state of her lovely green robe when she got back to land; and, oh! the trimmings in her cap! And monsieur had undergone all that, with the travelling besides, only to stop an hour and to go again. Pauline said he must have had bad news, to call him home, at the last post-town, and would no doubt soon be here again. When would miladi be expecting him?

Miladi replied by desiring her not to talk so fast, and Susanne shrugged her shoulders in an ecstasy of disappointment. She had boasted to Pauline that she should learn all, for certain: though Pauline, englobed in the lower regions amidst her casseroles and

marmites, could not of course expect to be enlightened, unless at second hand.

When Lady Isabel lay down to rest, she sank into somewhat calmer sleep than she had known of late ; also into a dream. She thought she was back again at East Lynne—not *back*, in one sense, but that she seemed never to have gone away from it—walking in the flower garden with Mr. Carlyle, while the three children played on the lawn. Her arm was within her husband's, and he was relating something to her : what the news was she could not remember afterwards, excepting that it was connected with the office and old Mr. Dill, and that Mr. Carlyle laughed when he told it. They appeared to be interrupted by the crying of Archibald : and, in turning to the lawn to ask what was the matter, she awoke. Alas ! it was the actual crying of her own child which awoke her ; this last child ; the ill-fated little being in the cradle beside her. But, for a single instant, she forgot recent events and doings ; she believed she was indeed in her happy home at East Lynne, a proud mother, an honoured wife. As recollection flashed across her with its piercing stings, she gave vent to a sharp cry of agony and unavailing despair.

CHAPTER XII.

ALONE FOR EVERMORE.

A SURPRISE awaited Lady Isabel Vane. It was on a windy day in the following March that a traveller arrived at Grenoble, and inquired his way, of a porter, to the best hotel in the place, his French being such as only an Englishman can produce.

" Hotel ? Let's see," returned the man, politely, but with native indifference ; " there are two good hotels near to each other, and monsieur would find himself comfortable at either. There is the Trois Dauphins ; and there is the Ambassadeurs."

" Monsieur " chose, haphazard, the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs, and was conducted to it. Shortly after his arrival there, he inquired his road to the Place Grencite ; a guide was offered, but he preferred to go alone. The place was found, and he thence turned to the apartments of Lady Isabel Vane.

Lady Isabel was sitting where you saw her the previous December, in the very same spot, courting the warmth of the fire, and—it seemed—courting the sparks also, for they appeared as fond of her as formerly : the marvel was, how she had escaped the flames. You might think that only a night had passed when you looked at the room ; for it were precisely the same aspect now as then. Everything was the same, even to the child's cradle in the remote corner, partially hidden by the bed-curtains, and the sleeping child within it. Lady Isabel's progress towards recovery had been lingering : as is frequently the case when mind and body are diseased. She was sitting when Susanne entered the room, and said that a " Monsieur Anglais " had arrived in the town to see her, and was waiting below, in the saloon.

Lady Isabel was startled. An English gentleman—to see her !

"English for certain," was Susanne's answer, for she had difficulty to comprehend his French.

Who could be desirous of seeing her? one out of the world, and forgotten! "Susanne," she suddenly cried aloud, a thought striking her: "it is never Sir Fran—it is not monsieur?"

"Not in the least like monsieur," complacently answered Susanne. "It was a tall, brave English gentleman, proud and noble, looking like a prince."

Every pulse within Lady Isabel's body throbbed rebelliously: her heart bounded until it seemed about to burst her side, and she turned sick with excitement. "Tall, brave, noble!" could that description apply to any but Mr. Carlyle? Strange that so unnatural an idea should have occurred to her: it could not have done so in a calmer moment. She rose, tottered across the chamber, and prepared to descend. Susanne's tongue was let loose at the proceeding.

"Was miladi out of her senses? To attempt to go downstairs would be a pretty ending, for she'd surely fall by the way. Miladi knew that the bottom step was of lead, and that no head could pitch down upon that, without ever being a head any more, except in the hospitals. Let miladi sit still in her place and she'd bring the monsieur up. What did it signify? He was not a young petit-maitre, he was fifty, if he was a day, his hair already turned to a fine grey."

This set the question, touching Mr. Carlyle, at rest, and her heart stilled again. The next moment she was inwardly laughing in bitter mockery at her insensate folly. Mr. Carlyle come to see her. Her! Francis Levison might be sending over some man of business, regarding the question of money, was her next thought, if so, she should certainly not see him.

"Go down to the gentleman and ask his name, Susanne. Ask also from whence he comes."

Susanne disappeared, and returned, and the gentleman behind her. Whether she had invited him, or whether he had chosen to come uninvited, there he was. Lady Isabel caught a glimpse, and flung her hands over her burning cheeks of shame. It was Lord Mount Severn.

"How did you find out where I was?" she gasped, when some painful words had been uttered on both sides.

"I went to Sir Francis Levison and demanded your address. Certain recent events implied that he and you must have parted, and I therefore deemed it time to inquire what he had done with you."

"Since last July," she interrupted, lifting her wan face, now colourless again. "Do not think worse of me than I am. He was here in December for an hour's recriminating interview, and we then parted for life."

"What have you heard of him lately?"

"Not anything. I never know what is passing in the world at home; I have no newspaper, no correspondence; and he would scarcely be so bold as to write to me again."

"I shall not shock you, then, by some tidings I bring you regarding him," returned Lord Mount Severn.

"The greatest shock to me would be to hear that I should ever again be subjected to see him," she answered,

"He is married."

"Heaven have pity on his poor wife!" was all the comment of Lady Isabel.

"He has married Alice Challenor."

She lifted her head then, in simple surprise. "Alice? Not Blanche?"

"The story runs that he has played Blanche very false. That he had been with her much, leading on her expectations; and then he suddenly proposed for her young sister. I know nothing of the details myself—it is not likely; and I had heard nothing, until one evening at the club I saw the announcement of the marriage for the following day at Saint George's. I was at the church the next morning before he was."

"Not to intercept the marriage!" breathlessly uttered Lady Isabel.

"Certainly not. I had no power to attempt anything of the sort. I went to demand an answer to my question—what he had done with you, and where you were? He gave me this address, but said he had known nothing of your movements since December."

There was a long silence. The earl appeared to be alternately ruminating and taking a survey of the room. Isabel sat with her head drooping.

"Why did you seek me out?" she presently broke forth. "I am not worth it. I have brought enough disgrace upon your name."

"And upon your husband's and upon your children's," he rejoined in his most severe manner, for it was not in the nature of the Earl of Mount Severn to gloss over guilt. "Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon me, as your nearest relative, to see after you, now that you are alone again, and to take care—so far as I can—that you do not lapse lower."

He might have spared her that stab. But she scarcely understood him. She looked at him, wondering whether she did understand.

"You have not a shilling in the world," he resumed. "How do you propose to live?"

"I have some money still. When—"

"His money?" sharply and haughtily interposed the earl.

"No," she indignantly replied. "I am selling my trinkets. Before they are all gone, I shall try to earn a livelihood in some way, by teaching, probably."

"Trinkets!" repeated Lord Mount Severn. "Mr Carlyle told me that you carried nothing away with you from East Lynne."

"Nothing that he had given me. These were mine before I married. You have seen Mr Carlyle then?" she faltered.

"Seen him!" echoed the indignant earl. "When such a blow was dealt him by a member of my family, could I do less than hasten to East Lynne to tender him my sympathies? I went with another object, also—to try to discover what could have been the moving springs of your conduct: for I protest when the black tidings reached me, I believed that you must have gone mad. You were one of the last whom I should have feared to trust. But I learned nothing, and Carlyle was ignorant as I. How could you strike him such a blow?"

"Lower and lower drooped her head, brighter shone the shame on her

hectic check. An awful blow to Mr. Carlyle it must indeed have been : she was feeling it in all its bitter intensity. Lord Mount Severn read her repentant looks.

"Isabel," he said, in a tone which had lost something of its harshness—and it was the first time he had called her by her Christian name : "I see that you are reaping the fruit of your conduct. Tell me how it happened. What demon prompted you to sell yourself to that bad man?"

"He is a bad man," she exclaimed. "A base, heartless, bad man."

"I warned you at the commencement of your married life, to avoid him ; to shun all association with him ; not to admit him to your house."

"His coming to East Lynne was not my doing," she whispered. "Mr. Carlyle invited him."

"I know he did. Invited him in his unsuspecting confidence, believing his wife to be his wife, a trustworthy woman of honour," was the severe remark.

She did not reply ; she could not gainsay it : she only sat with her meek face of shame, and her drooping eyelids.

"If ever a woman had a good husband, in every sense of the word, you had, in Carlyle : if ever man loved his wife, he loved you. How could you so requite him?"

She rolled, in a confused manner, the corners of her shawl over her unconscious fingers.

"I read the note you left for your husband. He showed it to me ; the only one, I believe, to whom he did show it. It was to him utterly inexplicable, it was so to me. A notion had been suggested to him, after your departure, that his sister had somewhat marred your peace at East Lynne ; and he blamed you much—if it were so—for not giving him your full confidence on the point, that he might have set matters on a right footing. But it was impossible (and there was the evidence in the note besides) that the presence of Miss Carlyle at East Lynne could be any excuse for your disgracing us all and ruining yourself."

"Do not let us speak of these things," said Lady Isabel, faintly. "It cannot redeem the past."

"But I must speak of them ; I have come to speak of them," persisted the earl : "I could not do so whilst that man was here. When these inexplicable events take place in the career of a woman, it is a father's duty to look into motives and causes and actions ; although the events in themselves may be, as in this case, irreparable. Your father is gone, but I stand in his place ; there is no one else to stand in it."

Her tears began to fall. And she let them fall—in silence. The earl resumed.

"But for that extraordinary letter, I should have supposed you had been solely actuated by a mad infatuation for the cur, Levison : its tenor gave the affair a different aspect. To what did you allude when you asserted that your husband had driven you to it?"

"He knew," she answered, scarcely above her breath.

"He did not know," sternly replied the earl. "A more truthful, honourable man than Carlyle does not exist on the face of the earth. When he told me then, in his agony of grief, that he was unable to form even a suspicion of your meaning, I could have staked my estate on his veracity. I would stake it still."

"I believed," she began, in a low, nervous voice, for she knew that there was no evading the questions of Lord Mount Severn, when he was resolved to have an answer: and, indeed, she was too weak, both in body and spirit, to resist: "I believed that his love was no longer mine; and that he had deserted me for another."

The earl stared at her. "What can you mean by 'deserted'? He was with you."

"There is a desertion of the heart," was her murmured answer.

"Desertion of a fiddlestick!" retorted his lordship. "The interpretation we gave to the note, I and Carlyle, was that you had been actuated by motives of jealousy; had penned it in a jealous mood. I put the question to Carlyle—as between man and man—do you listen, Isabel?—whether he had given you cause; and he answered me as with God over us. He had never given you cause: he had been faithful to you in thought, word, and deed: he had never, so far as he could call to mind, even looked upon another woman with covetous feelings, since the hour that he made you his wife; his whole thoughts had been of you, and of you alone. It is more than many a husband can say," significantly coughed Lord Mount Severn.

Her pulses were beating wildly. A powerful conviction, that the words were true; that her own blind jealousy had been utterly mistaken and unfounded; was forcing its way to her brain.

"After that, I could only set your letter down as a subterfuge," resumed the earl; "a false, barefaced plea, put forth to conceal your real motive: and I told Carlyle so. I inquired how it was he had never detected any secret understanding between you and that—that beast; located, as the fellow was, in the house. He replied, that no such suspicion had ever occurred to him. He placed the most implicit confidence in you, and would have trusted you with the man round the world; or with any one else."

She entwined her hands one within the other, pressing them to pain. It could not deaden the pain at her heart.

"Carlyle told me he had been unusually occupied during the stay of that man. Besides his ordinary office work, his time was taken up with some secret business for a family in the neighbourhood, and he had repeatedly to see them after office hours. Very old acquaintances of his, he said, relatives of the Carlyle family, and he was as anxious about the secret as they were. This, I observed to him, may have rendered him unobservant to what was passing at home. He told me, I remember, that on the evening of the—the catastrophe, he ought to have gone with you to a dinner-party, but most important circumstances arose, in connection with the affair, which obliged him to meet two gentlemen at his office, and to receive them in secret, unknown to his clerks."

"Did he—mention the name of the family?" inquired Lady Isabel, with white lips.

"Yes, he did... I forgot it, though. Rabbit? Rabbit? some such name as that?"

"Was it Hare?"

"That was it. Hare. He said you appeared vexed that he did not accompany you to the dinner; perceiving this, he intended to go in afterwards, but was prevented from doing so. When the interview was over in his office, he was again detained in Mrs. Hare's house; and by business as impossible to avoid as the other."

"Important business!" she echoed, giving way for a moment to the bitterness of former feelings. "He was pacing their garden by moonlight with Barbara—Miss Hare. I saw them as my carriage passed."

"And you were jealous!" exclaimed Lord Mount Severn, with mocking reproach, as he detected her mood. "Listen!" he whispered, bending his head towards her. "Whilst you thought, as your present tone would seem to intimate, that they were there to enjoy each other's society, know that they—Carlyle, at any rate—was pacing the walk to keep guard. There was one within that house—for a short interview with his poor mother—one who lives in danger of the scaffold; to which his own father would be the first to deliver him up. They were keeping the path against that father, Carlyle and the young lady. Of all the nights in the previous seven years, that one only saw the unhappy son at home, for a half-hour's meeting with his mother and sister. Carlyle, in the grief and excitement caused by your conduct, confided so much to me, when mentioning what kept him from the dinner-party."

Her face had become crimson, crimson at her past lamentable folly. And there could be no redemption!

"But he was always with Barbara Hare!" she murmured, by way of some faint excuse.

"She had to see him upon this affair: her mother could not, for it was obliged to be kept from the father. And so you construed business interviews into assignations!" continued Lord Mount Severn with cutting derision. "I had given you credit for better sense. But was this enough to hurl you on to the step you took? Surely not! You must have yielded to the persuasions of that wicked man."

"It is all over now," she wailed.

"Carlyle was true and faithful to you, and to you alone. Few women have the chance of happiness in their married life, in the degree that you had. He is an upright and good man; one of nature's gentlemen: one, that England may be proud of, as having grown upon her soil. The more I see of him the greater becomes my admiration of him, and of his thorough honour. Do you know what he did in the matter of damages?"

She shook her head.

"He did not wish to proceed for damages; or, only for the trifling sum demanded by law; but the jury, feeling for his wrongs, gave unprecedently heavy ones. Since the fellow came into his baronetcy, they have been paid: Carlyle, immediately handed them over to the county hospital. He holds the apparently obsolete opinion, that money cannot wipe out a wife's dishonour."

"Let us close these topics," implored the poor invalid. "I acted

wickedly and madly ; and I have the consequence to bear for ever, More I cannot say."

" Where do you intend to place your future residence ? " inquired the earl.

" I am unable to tell. I shall leave this town as soon as I am well enough."

" Ay. It cannot be pleasant for you to remain under the eyes of its inhabitants. You were here with him, were you not ? "

" They think I am his wife," she murmured. " The servants think it."

" That's well ; so far. How many servants have you ? "

" Two. I am not strong enough yet to do much myself, so am obliged to keep two," she continued, as if in apology for the extravagance, under her reduced circumstances. " As soon as ever the baby can walk, I shall manage to do with one."

The earl look confounded. " The baby ! " he uttered, in a tone of astonishment and grief painful to her to hear. " Isabel ! is there a child ? "

Not less painful was her own emotion, as she hid her face. Lord Mount Severn rose, and paced the room with striding steps.

" I did not know it ! I did not know it ! Wicked, heartless villain ! He ought to have married you before its birth. Was the divorce out previously ? " he added, arresting his strides to ask it.

" Yes."

" Coward ! sneak ! May good men shun him from henceforth ! may his Queen refuse to receive him ! You, an earl's daughter ! Oh, Isabel ! How utterly you have lost yourself ! "

Lady Isabel started from her chair, in a burst of hysterical sobs, her hands extended beseechingly towards the earl. " Spare me ! spare me ! You have been rending my heart ever since you entered ; indeed I am too weak to bear it."

The earl, in truth, had been betrayed into showing more of his sentiments than he intended. He summoned his recollection.

" Well, well, sit down again, Isabel," he said, putting her into her chair. " We will go to the point I chiefly came here to settle. What sum will it take you to live upon ? Quietly : as of course you would now wish to live ; but comfortably."

" I will not accept anything," she replied, " I will earn my own living ; " and the earl's irascibility again rose at the speech. He spoke in a sharp tone.

" Absurd, Isabel ! do not add romantic folly to your other mistakes. Earn your own living, indeed ! As much as is necessary for you to live upon, I shall supply. No remonstrance : I tell you I am acting as for your father. Do you suppose he would have abandoned you, to starve or to work ? "

The allusion touched every chord within her bosom, and the tears fell fast. " I thought I could earn my living by teaching," she sobbed.

" And how much did you anticipate the teaching would bring you in ? "

" Not very much," she listlessly said. " A hundred a year, perhaps : I am very clever at music and singing. That sum might keep us, I fancy, even if I only went out by day."

" And a grand 'keep' it would be ! You shall have that sum every quarter."

"No, no ! oh no ! I do not deserve it ; I could not accept it. I have forfeited all claim to assistance."

"Not to mine. Now, it is of no use to excite yourself, for my mind is made up. I never willingly forego a duty, and I look upon this not only as a duty, but an imperative one. Upon my return, I shall immediately settle four hundred a year upon you, and you can draw it quarterly."

"Then half the sum," she reiterated, knowing how useless it was to contend with Lord Mount Severn when he mounted the stilts of "duty." "Indeed, two hundred a year will be abundance ; it will seem like riches to me."

"I have named the sum, Isabel, and I shall not make it less. A hundred pounds every three months shall be paid to you, dating from this day. This does not count," he continued, laying down some notes upon the table.

"Indeed, I have some ready money by me," she urged, her cheeks flushing at what she looked upon as unmerited kindness for none could think worse of her than she did of herself. "Pray take it back : you are too good to me."

"I don't know what you call 'ready money,'" returned the earl, "but you have just informed me you were selling your trinkets to live upon. Put up the notes, Isabel : they are only a small amount, just to go on with. Are you in debt?"

"Oh no."

"And mind you don't get into it," advised the earl, as he rose to depart. "You can let me hear of you from time to time, Isabel."

"What does the world say of me?" she took courage to whisper. It was a question often in her own mind. Lord Mount Severn paused before he replied, marvelling, probably, that she could ask it.

"Just what you may have said in the days now over, at any who had gone the way that you have done. What did you expect that it would say?"

What indeed ! She stood there with her humble face and her beating heart. The earl took her hand within his in token of farewell : turned, and was gone.

Lord Mount Severn, stern and uncompromising as he was, had yet a large share of kindness and conscientiousness. From the moment he heard of the false step taken by Lady Isabel, and that it was with Francis Levison she had flown, he cast more blame than he had ever done before upon the conduct of his wife, in having forced her—so he regarded it—upon Mr Carlyle. In short, he considered his wife as the primary, though remote, cause of the present ill ; not that he in the slightest degree underrated Lady Isabel's own share in it ; quite the contrary. From this motive, no less than that he was her relative, he deemed it his duty to see after her in her shame and sadness.

Susanne attended Lord Mount Severn to the door and watched him down the street, thinking what a "brave Monsieur Anglais" he was, and how delighted miladi must be at seeing a friend, to break the monotony of her sick and lonely existence. Susanne made no doubt that the visit must so far have aroused miladi as to set her thinking about getting out her smart dresses once more, and that the first words

she should hear, on entering miladi's presence, would touch on that attractive point.

The Earl of Mount Seven returned to the Hôtel-des Ambassadeurs, dined, and slept there; and the following morning quitted it on his return to the pleasures and bustle of civilized life. And Lady Isabel remained in her chamber, alone.

Alone : alone ! Alone for evermore,

CHAPTER XIII.

BARBARA'S MISDOINGS.

A SUNNY afternoon in summer. More correctly speaking, it may be said a summer's evening, for the bright beams were already slanting athwart the substantial garden of Mr. Justice Hare, and the tea-hour, seven, was passing. Mr. and Mrs. Hare and Barbara were seated at the meal. Somchow, meals always seemed in process at Justice Hare's. Barbara sat in tears, for the justice was giving her a "piece of his mind," and poor Mrs. Hare, agreeing with her husband (as she would have done had he proposed to set the house on fire and burn her up in it), yet sympathizing with Barbara, moved uneasily in her chair.

Barbara had been giving mortal offence. Barbara had given the same offence occasionally for some years past : she had just refused an eligible offer of marriage, and the justice was storming over it. In the abstract, it was of no moment whatever to Mr. Justice Hare whether his daughters pined and withered out their days as fading maidens, or whether they raced through life as bustling matrons. Neither, in the abstract, did the justice want Barbara away from the paternal home, or deem her an incumbrance within it ; on the contrary, were Barbara absent, he might be at fault for a target at which to aim the arrows of his hard words. Neither had money anything to do with it : whether Barbara married or whether she remained single, she had an ample fortune. No, the anger of Justice Hare at Barbara's refusing the offers made to her, had nothing to do with ordinary causes.

How the world would get on without gossip, I will leave the world to judge. That West Lynne could not have got on without it, and without interfering in every one's business but its own, is enough for me. West Lynne had chosen to make a wonder of the fact that Barbara Hare should remain Barbara Hare. Of all the damsels indigenous to the soil, she, with her beauty, her attractive manners, and her fortune, had appeared the most likely one to be appropriated. And yet she was still Barbara Hare ! The gossips set their heads together to discover why she was neglected. *Neglected* they considered her, for Barbara was not one to talk of lost opportunities. The conclusion they came to was, that the unhappy crime attaching to her brother was the sole cause ; and, by some mishap, this nonsense reached the ears of Justice Hare. If the justice was sensitive upon one point, it was upon that which related to that dark and dreadful deed, if he was bitter against any living being, it was against his miserable son. To have it said that Barbara remained single because no one would have her on account of

her brother," was glad and wormwood to Justice Hare, for the disgrace seemed then to be reflected home on *her* and his. The justice would have liked to lift his foot and kick West Lynne into the nearest, and greatest, and muddiest of ponds; he would have liked to pounce on Richard, and hand him over to the mercies of the county assize; and he would have been glad to marry Barbara off hand, that *that* part of the scandal at any rate might be refuted. Therefore, when Barbara refused offer after offer (she had refused four now), it may readily be credited how greatly it aroused the ire of the justice.

"You do it on purpose; you do it to anger me," thundered the justice, bringing down his hand on the tea-table, and causing the cups to rattle.

"No, I don't, papa," sobbed Barbara.

"Then why do you do it?"

Barbara was silent.

"No; you can't reply: you have nothing to say." What is the matter, pray, with Major Thorn? Come, I will be answered."

"I don't like him," faltered Barbara.

"You do like him; you are telling me an untruth. You have liked him well enough whenever he has been here."

"I like him as an acquaintance, papa. Not as a husband."

"Not as a husband!" repeated the exasperated justice. "Why, bless my heart and body, the girl's going mad! Not as a husband! Who asked you to like him as a husband before he became such? Did you ever hear that it was necessary, or expedient, or becoming for a young lady to set on and begin to 'like' a gentleman as 'her husband'?"

Barbara felt a little bewildered.

"Here's the whole parish saying that Barbara Hare can't be married; that nobody will have her on account of—of—that cursed stain left by—I won't trust myself to name him; I should go too far. Now don't you think that's a pretty disgrace, a nice state of things?"

"But it is not true," said Barbara; "people do propose for me."

"But what's the use of their proposing when you say 'No'?" raved the justice. "Is that the way to let the parish know that they propose? You are an ungrateful, rebellious, self-willed daughter, and you'll never be anything else."

Barbara's tears flowed freely. The justice gave a dash at the bell-handle, to order away the tea-things; and after their removal the subject was renewed, together with Barbara's grief. That was the worst of Justice Hare. Let him take up a grievance (it was not often he had a real one) and he kept on at it, as a blacksmith hammering at his forge. In the midst of a stormy oration, Mr. Carlyle came in:

Not much altered; not much. A year and three-quarters had gone by, and they had served to silver his hair upon the temples. His manner, too, would never again be careless and light as it once had been. He was the same keen man of business, the same pleasant, intelligent companion: the generality of people saw no change in him. Barbara rose to escape.

"No," said Justice Hare, planting himself between her and the door: "that's the way you like to get out of my reach when I am talking to

you. You won't go; so sit down again. I'll tell you of all your ill-conduct before Mr. Carlyle, and see if that will shame you."

Barbara resumed her seat, a rush of crimson dyeing her cheeks. And Mr. Carlyle looked inquiringly, seeming to ask an explanation of her distress. The justice gave it after his own fashion.

" You know, Carlyle, that horrible blow that fell upon th^t, that shameful disgrace. Well, because the parish can't black enough about the fact itself, it must begin upon Barbara, saying that the disgrace and humiliation are reflected upon her, and that nobody will come near her to ask her to be his wife. One would think, rather than lie under the stigma and afford the parish room to talk, she'd marry the first man that appeared, if it was the parish beadle—any one else would. But now, what are the facts? You'll stare when you know them. She has received a bushel of good offers; a bushel of them," repeated the justice, dashing his hand down on his knee, " and she says 'No' to all. The last was to-day, from Major Thorn, and my young lady takes and puts the stopper upon it, as usual, without reference to me or her mother, without saying with your leave or by your leave. She wants to be kept in her room for a week upon bread and water, to bring her to her senses."

Mr. Carlyle glanced at Barbara. She was sitting meekly under the infliction, her wet lashes falling on her flushed cheeks and shading her eyes. The justice was heated enough, and had pushed his flaxen wig up in the warmth of his argument.

" What do you say to her? " snapped the justice.

" Matrimony may not have charms for Barbara," replied Mr. Carlyle, half jokingly.

" Nothing has charms for her," growled Justice Hare. " She's one of the contrary ones. By the way, though," hastily resumed the justice, leaving the objectionable subject, as another flashed across his memory; " they were coupling your name and matrimony together, Carlyle, last night at the Buck's Head."

A very perceptible tinge rose to the face of Mr. Carlyle, telling of inward emotion, but his voice and manner betrayed none.

" Indeed," he carelessly said.

" Ah, you are a sly one; you are, Carlyle: remember how sly you were with your first—" marriage, Justice Hare was going to bring out, but it suddenly occurred to him that, all circumstances considered, it was not precisely the topic to recall to Mr. Carlyle. So he stopped himself in the utterance, coughed, and went on again. " There you go, over to Sir John Dohede's, not to see Sir John, but paying court to Miss Dohede."

" So the Buck's Head was amusing itself with that! " good-humouredly observed Mr. Carlyle. " Well, Miss Dohede is going to be married, and I am drawing up the settlements."

" Not she; she marries young Somerset; every one knows that. It's the other, Louisa. A nice girl, Carlyle."

" Very," responded Mr. Carlyle, and it was all the answer he gave. The justice, tired of sitting indoors, tired, perhaps, of extracting nothing satisfactory from Mr. Carlyle, rose, set his wig aright before the looking-glass, and quitted the house on his usual evening visit to the Buck's Head. Barbara, who watched him down the path, saw that he encoun-

tered some one who happened to be passing the gate. She could not at first distinguish who it might be ; nothing but an arm and shoulder, cased in velvet, met her view. But as their positions changed in conversation, she saw that it was Locksley, who had been the chief witness (not a vindictive one ; he could not help himself) against her brother Richard, touching the murder of Hallijohn.

"What can be the matter with papa ?" exclaimed Barbara. "Locksley must have said something to anger him. He is coming in in the greatest passion, mamma : his face crimson, and his hands and arms working."

"Oh dear, Barbara !" was all poor Mrs. Hare's reply. The justice's great storms of passion frightened her.

In he came, closed the door, and stood in the middle of the room, looking alternately at Mrs. Hare and Barbara.

"What is this cursed report that's being whispered in the place ?" quoth he, in a tone of suppressed rage, but not unmixed with awe.

"What report ?" asked Mr. Carlyle, for the justice waited for an answer, and Mrs. Hare seemed unable to speak. Barbara took care to keep silence : she had some misgiving that the justice's words might refer to herself, and the recent grievance.

"A report that he—~~he~~—has been here, disengaged as a labourer ! has dared to show himself in the place, where he'll yet come to the gibbet."

Mrs. Hare's face turned white as death. Mr. Carlyle rose, and dexterously contrived to stand before her, so that it should not be seen. Barbara silently locked her hands, one within the other, and turned to the window.

"Of whom do you speak ?" asked Mr. Carlyle, in a matter-of-fact tone, as if he were putting the most ordinary question. He knew too well ; but temporized for the sake of Mrs. Hare.

"Of whom do I speak ?" uttered the exasperated justice, beside himself with passion : "of whom should I speak but the bastard Dick ? Who else in West Lynne is likely to come to a felon's death ?"

"Oh, Richard !" sobbed forth Mrs. Hare, as she sank back in her chair ; "be merciful ! He is our own true son."

"Never a true son of the Hares," raved the justice. "A true son of wickedness, and cowardice, and blight, and evil. If he has dared to show his face at West Lynne, I'll set the whole police of England upon his track, that he may be brought here as he ought, if he must come. When Locksley told me of it, just now, I raised my hand to knock him down, so infamously false did I deem the report. Do *you* know anything of his having been here ?" continued the justice to his wife, in a pointed, resolute tone.

How Mrs. Hare would have extricated herself, or what she would have answered, cannot even be imagined, but Mr. Carlyle interposed.

"You are frightening Mrs. Hare, sir. Don't you see that the very report of such a thing is alarming her into illness ? But—allow me to inquire what it may be that Locksley said."

"I met him at the gate," returned Justice Hare, turning his attention upon Mr. Carlyle. "He was going by as I reached it. 'Oh, justice,' he began, 'I am glad I met you. There's a nasty report in the place, that Richard has been seen here. I'd see what I could do towards

hushing it up, sir, if I were you, for it may only serve to put the police in mind of bygone things, which it may be better they should forget.' Carlyle, I went, as I tell you, to knock him down. I asked him how he could have the hardihood to repeat such slander to my face. He was on the high horse directly: said the parish spoke the slander, not he; and I got out of him what it was he had heard."

"And what was it?" interrupted Mr. Carlyle, more eagerly than he generally spoke.

"Why, they say that the fellow shewed himself here some time ago, a year or so, disguised as a farm labourer—confounded fools! Not but that he'd have been the fool, had he done it."

"To be sure he would," repeated Mr. Carlyle, "and he is not fool enough for that, sir. Let West Lynne talk, Mr. Hare. but do not you put faith in a word of its gossip. I never do. Poor Richard, wherever he may be——"

"I won't have him pitied in my presence," burst forth the justice. "Poor Richard, indeed! Villain Richard, if you please."

"I was about to observe that wherever he may be, whether in the backwoods of America, or digging for gold in California, or wandering about the United Kingdom, there is little fear that he will quit his place of safety, to dare the dangerous ground of West Lynne. Had I been you, sir, I should have laughed at Locksley and his words."

"Why does West Lynne invent such lies?"

"Ah, there's the rub. I dare say West Lynne could not tell you why, if it were paid for doing so. But it seems to have been a lame story it has got up this time. If they must have concocted a report that Richard had been seen at West Lynne, why put it back to a year ago? why not have fixed it for to-day or yesterday? If I heard anything more, I would treat it with the silence and contempt it deserves, justice."

Silence and contempt were not greatly in the justice's line; noise and explosion were more so. But he had a high opinion of the judgment of Mr. Carlyle; and, growling a sort of assent, he once more set forth to pay his evening visit.

"Oh, Archibald!" uttered Mrs. Hare, when her husband was half way down the path, "what a mercy that you were here! I should inevitably have betrayed myself."

Barbara turned from the window. "But what could have possessed Locksley to say what he did?" she exclaimed.

"I have no doubt Locksley spoke with a good motive," said Mr. Carlyle. "He is not unfriendly to Richard, and thought, probably, that by telling Mr. Hare of the report, he might get it stopped. The rumour has been mentioned to me."

Barbara shivered. "How can it have come to light?" she breathed.

"I am at a loss to know," said Mr. Carlyle. "The person to mention it to me was Tom Herbert. He met me yesterday, and said, 'What's this row about Dick Hare?' 'What row?' I asked him. 'Why, that Dick was at West Lynne some time back, disguised as a farm labourer.' Just what Locksley said to Mr. Hare. I laughed at Tom Herbert," continued Mr. Carlyle; "turned his report into ridicule, and made him turn it into ridicule also, before I had done with him."

"Well, it be the means of causing Richard's discovery?" murmured Mrs. Hare between her dry lips.

"No, no," warmly responded Mr. Carlyle. "Had the report arisen immediately after he was really gone, it might not have been so pleasant. But nearly two years have elapsed since the period. Be under no uneasiness, dear Mrs. Hare, for rely upon it there is no cause for it."

Mrs. Hare sighed deeply, and left the room to proceed to her chamber. Barbara and Mr. Carlyle were alone.

"Oh, that the real murderer could be discovered!" she aspirated, clasping her hands. "To be subjected to these shocks is dreadful. Mamma will not be herself for days to come."

"I wish the right man could be found; but it seems as far off as ever," remarked Mr. Carlyle.

Barbara sat ruminating. It seemed that she had something to say to Mr. Carlyle, but a feeling caused her to hesitate. When she did at length speak, it was in a low, timid voice.

"You remember the description Richard gave, that last night—of the person he had met—the true Thorn?"

"Yes."

"Did it strike you then—has it ever occurred to you to think—that it accorded with—with some one?"

"In what way, Barbara?" he asked, after a pause. "It accorded with the description Richard always gave of the man Thorn."

"Richard spoke of the peculiar movement of throwing off the hair from the forehead—in this way. Did that strike you as being familiar to you—in connection with the white hand and the diamond ring?"

"Many have a habit of pushing off their hair: I think I do it myself sometimes. Barbara, what do you mean? Have you a suspicion of any one?"

"Have you?" she returned, answering the question by asking another.

"I have not. Since Captain Thorn was disposed of, my suspicions have not pointed to any one."

This sealed Barbara's lips. She had hers; certain vague doubts, bringing wonder more than anything else. At times she had thought the same doubts might have occurred to Mr. Carlyle. She now found that they had not done so. The terrible domestic calamity which had happened to Mr. Carlyle the same night that Richard protested he had seen, Thorn, had prevented Barbara from discussing the matter with him then; and she had never done so since. Richard had not been further heard of, and the affair had remained in abeyance.

"I begin to despair of its ever being discovered," she observed. "What will become of poor Richard?"

"The discovery that Thorn was not the Thorn completely checkmated us," said Mr. Carlyle.

"It would have done so, had Richard not seen the other."

"I have had my doubts whether that was not, after all, a flight of Richard's imagination. It is so extraordinary that he should meet the man by moonlight, and that nothing should have been seen of

him at any other time; before or after. Richard's mind was imbued with the thought and usage of Thorn, and those two have conjured up his appearance in some extraordinary manner."

"That it never did!" cried Barbara. "I wish I were as sure of heaven, as that Richard saw Thorn that night. You believed in yourself at the time?"

"I did. His earnestness impressed me. But I had not time to reflect upon the facts. There was no one at West Lynne whom Richard has there been since, to whom Richard's description could apply, Captain Thorn excepted."

"At West Lynne—no," said Barbara.

"We can but wait, and hope that time may bring forth its own solution," concluded Mr. Carlyle.

"Ah, sighed Barbara, "but it is weary waiting; weary, weary!"

"How is it that you contrive to fall under the paternal displeasure?" he resumed, in a gayer tone.

She blushed vividly, and it was her only answer.

"The Major, Thorn, alluded to by your father, is our old friend I presume?"

Barbara inclined her head.

"He is a very pleasant man, Barbara. Many a young lady would be proud to have him."

"Yes, he is a pleasant man," quietly answered Barbara, but she spoke in a tone that did not invite further discussion.

Captain Thorn, in visiting the Herberts in times gone by, had been much struck with Barbara. Had his circumstances allowed it, he would then have solicited her to become his wife. Recently, he had acquired some property by inheritance, and had also been promoted a step in his profession. The first use he made of his ease was to write both to Barbara and her father. Barbara declined his offer, as you have seen, and the justice would be quite sure not to let her hear the last of it for some time to come.

"You will do all you can to quell this rumour touching Richard," she said to Mr. Carlyle.

"Depend upon that. The less Richard's name is heard in West Lynne, the better. It puzzles me to know how it can have arisen."

There was a pause. Barbara broke it: but she did not look at Mr. Carlyle as she spoke. "The other rumour: is it a correct one?"

"What other rumour?"

"That you are about to marry Louisa Dobede."

"It is not. I have no intention of marrying any one. Nay, I will say it more strongly: it is my intention not to marry any one; to remain as I am."

Barbara lifted her eyes to his in the surprise of the moment.

"You look amazed, Barbara. No. She—who was my wife—lives."

"What of that?" uttered Barbara, in simplicity.

He did not answer for a moment, and when he did, it was in a low tone, as he stood by the table at which Barbara sat, and looked down upon her.

"Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery!"

And before Barbara could answer—if, indeed, she had found any answer to give—or had recovered her surprise, he had taken his hat and was gone.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ACCIDENT.

To return for a short time to Lady Isabel. As the year advanced she grew stronger, and in the latter part of the summer made preparations for quitting Grenoble. Where she would fix her residence, or what she would do, she knew not. She was miserable and restless, and cared little what became of her. The remotest spot on earth, one unpenetrated by the steps of civilized man, appeared the most desirable to her. Where was she to find this?

She set out on her search—she, the child, and a young peasant woman whom she had engaged as *bonne*; for Susanne having a lover at Grenoble altogether declined to leave the place. All her luggage, except the things absolutely required, Lady Isabel had forwarded to Paris, there to be warehoused until she sent further directions. It was a lovely day when she quitted Grenoble. The train travelled safely until in the dusk of the evening they approached a place called Cammère, where Lady Isabel proposed to rest for a day or two. Railway accidents are less frequent in France than they are with us, but when they do occur they are wholesale catastrophes, the memory of which lasts for a lifetime. The train was within a short distance of the station when there came a sudden shock and crash as of the day of doom: and engine, carriages, and passengers lay in one confused mass at the foot of a steep embankment. The gathering darkness added to the awful confusion.

The carriage in which Lady Isabel with her child and *bonne* travelled, lay beneath a superincumbent mass of ruins: they were amongst the last passengers to be extricated. The *bonne* and the poor baby were quite dead. Lady Isabel was alive and conscious, but so severely injured that the medical men who had been brought to the spot in all haste turned from her to give their attention to other sufferers whose case seemed less desperate—she heard them say that she would not survive amputation, and that nothing else could be done; that she must die whether there was an operation or not. The injuries lay in one leg, and the lower part of her face. She had not counted upon dying in this manner, and death in the guise of horrible suffering was not the abstract thing of release and escape which it had seemed, when she had wished for it as the end of all her wretchedness. She was unable to move, but the shock had deadened sensation; she was not yet in pain, and her mind was for a short interval supernaturally clear and lucid. A Sister of Charity approached the stretcher on which she had been laid, and offered her some water. "Isabel drank eagerly."

"Is there ought else I can do?" asked the sister.

" My baby and its nurse were with me in the carriage—tell me, have they been found? Is my child killed? " asked Isabel.

The sister turned to gain intelligence, but the confusion and noise were so great that she could scarcely hope to ascertain anything with certainty. A poor little child, quite dead, but not much disfigured, had been carried into the railway shed, and laid down not far from Lady Isabel. The sister took it tenderly up.

" Was this your child? " said she, turning to Lady Isabel. " It is a little angel, and is beholding the face of its Father in heaven."

It was the ill-starred child of Lady Isabel. She pressed its little face to her bosom, and her first feeling was a deep thankfulness that it had been so soon taken away from the evil to come. She believed she was to die also in the space of a few hours, or less; and the dull, apathetic indifference to all belonging to this life, which generally sets in with the approach of death, was stealing over her. She motioned to the sister to remove it, saying softly:

" It is thus I would have wished it to be."

" Have you no message or instructions for your friends? If you will trust me, I will fulfil your wishes. Whilst your mind is clear, it will be well to settle your duties towards those you are leaving behind." The sister had heard what the doctor said of Lady Isabel's condition.

" All who ever knew me will rejoice to hear that I am no more," said Isabel. " My death will be the only reparation I can offer, for the grief and shame my life has brought on all who had the evil fortune to belong to me. You understand I have been a great sinner."

" Try to accept death as a just recompence for your sins—make in this last moment an act of faith and obedience, by uniting your own will with His who sends this suffering; it is then changed from the nature of punishment into a blessing. Our sorrows are the gifts of Almighty God, no less than our joys."

" I will; I have taken up my cross," said Lady Isabel faintly, for the pain of her injuries was beginning to make itself felt.

" Can I write to any one for you? " asked the sister, " tell me now, whilst you can think of it."

" Have you paper and writing things at hand? Write then. Direct the letter first, to the Earl of Mount—Stay! " she interrupted, feeling how undesirable it was to make known her private affairs, even in that strange place. Besides, from the injury to her face, she could only speak with the greatest difficulty. " Could I not write a line myself? I think I could, if you will hold the paper before me: my hands are not injured; my intellect is clear."

The compassionate sister complied; and Lady Isabel contrived to scrawl a few words as she lay, first directing the letter to the earl's town house. They were to the effect that she was dying from the fatal injuries of the railway accident: that her baby was killed, and its nurse. She thanked Lord Mount Severn for all his goodness to her; she said she was glad to die, to deliver him and all who belonged to her from the disgrace and shame she had been to them. " Go to Mr. Carlyle," she continued. " Say that I hurriedly beg him to forgive me; that I also beg the forgiveness of his children when they shall be old enough to know the crime I have committed against them. Tell

him 'I repent, and have repented bitterly—there are no words to express that bitterness.' She had written so far, when the torture of pain, which had begun to make itself more and more felt, was becoming insufferable. Gathering her strength for a last effort, she wrote in characters, such as those with which one on the rack might have signed his confession : "Forgive; Isabel," and whispered : "Send it when I am dead; not before; and add a few words of confirmation."

When at length the surgeons came up to Lady Isabel, to examine more minutely the injuries she had sustained, she was quite insensible, and they thought she was dead. They said so to the sister, who was then kneeling beside her, repeating the prayers appointed for the passing soul. She finished them and retired to a distance, other sufferers claiming her services. She did not return to Lady Isabel, whom she fully believed to be dead; and she despatched the letter, adding to it, as requested, some words of confirmation. The dead were buried, and a special mass was said for them. The survivors were sent to the hospital; all that could be done for them was done; neither skill nor kindness being wanting.

Lady Isabel recovered her consciousness, and found herself lying on a pallet in a ward in the hospital. It was long before she could recall what had happened, or understand that she had not died. The surgeons, on further inspection, had found life still lingering in her shattered frame. The injuries were terrible enough, but not of necessity fatal, though the prospect of recovery was faint. It would have been cruel to resort to an operation with such slender chances of success, and they tried other means, which to the honour and glory of their skill, promised to succeed. Lady Isabel was still fluctuating between life and death; but the tide began at length slowly to set in towards life. She remained three months in the hospital before she could be removed. The change that had passed over her in those three months was little less than death itself no one could have recognized in the pale, thin, shattered, crippled invalid, she who had been known as Lady Isabel Vane.

The letter was duly delivered at the town house of Lord Mount Severn, as addressed. The countess was sojourning there for a few days. She had quitted it after the season, but some business, or pleasure, had called her again to town. Lord Vane was with her, but the earl was in Scotland. They were at breakfast, she and her son, when the letter was brought in. eightpence to pay. Its strangely written address; its foreign aspect, its appearance altogether, excited her curiosity. In her own mind she believed she had dropped upon a nice little conjugal mare's-nest.

"I shall open this," cried she.

"Why, it is addressed to papa!" exclaimed Lord Vane, who possessed all his father's notions of honour.

"But such an odd letter! It may require an immediate answer; or is some begging petition, perhaps. Go on with your breakfast."

Lady Mount Severn opened the letter, and with some difficulty spelt through its contents. They shocked even her.

"How dreadful!" she uttered, in the impulse of the moment.

"What is dreadful?" asked Lord Vane, looking up from his breakfast.

"Lady Isabel—Isabel Vane—you have not forgotten her?"

"Forgotten her!" he echoed. "Why, mamma, I must possess a funny memory to have forgotten her already!"

"She is dead. She has been killed in a railway accident in France."

His large eyes honest and true as they had been in childhood, filled, and his face flushed. He said nothing, for emotion was strong within him.

"But, shocking as it is, it is better for her," went on the countess; "for, poor creature! what could her future life have been?"

"Oh, don't say it!" impetuously broke out the young viscount. "Killed in a railway accident, and for you to say that it is better for her!"

"So it is better," said the countess. "Don't go into heroics, William. You are quite old enough to know that she had brought misery upon herself, and disgrace upon all connected with her. No one could ever have taken notice of her again."

"I would," said the boy, stoutly.

Lady Mount Severn smiled derisively.

"I would—I never liked any one in the world half so much as I liked Isabel."

"That's past and gone. You could not have continued to like her, after the disgrace she wrought."

"Some one else wrought more of the disgrace than she did; and, had I been a man, I would have shot him dead," flashed the viscount.

"You don't know anything about it."

"Don't I," he returned, not over-dutifully. But Lady Mount Severn had not brought him up to be dutiful.

"May I read the letter, mamma?" he demanded after a pause.

"If you can read it," she replied, tossing it to him. "She dictated it when she was dying."

Lord Vane took the letter to a window, and stayed looking over it for some time, the countess ate an egg and a plate of ham meanwhile. Presently he came back with it folded, and laid it on the table.

"You will forward it to papa to-day?" he observed.

"I shall forward it to him. But there's no hurry; and I don't exactly know where your papa may be. I shall send the notice of her death to the papers; and am glad to do it. It is a blight removed from the family."

"Mamma, I do think you are the unkindest woman that ever breathed!"

"I'll give you something to call me unkind for, if you don't mind," retorted the countess, her colour rising. "Dock you of your holiday, and pack you back to school to day."

A few mornings after this, Mr. Carlyle left Last Lynne, and proceeded to his office as usual. Scarcely was he seated, when Mr. Dill entered, and Mr. Carlyle looked at him inquiringly, for it was not Mr. Carlyle's custom to be intruded upon by any one until he had opened his letters: then he would ring for Mr. Dill. The letters and the *Times* newspaper lay on his table before him. The old gentleman came up in a cover, thus sort of way, which made Mr. Carlyle look all the more.

"I beg your pardon, sir; will you let me ask if you have heard any particular news?"

"Yes, I have heard it," replied Mr. Carlyle.

"Then, sir, I beg your pardon a thousand times over. It occurred to me that you probably had not, Mr. Archibald; and I thought I would have said a word to prepare you, before you came upon it suddenly in the paper."

"To prepare me!" echoed Mr. Carlyle, as old Dill was turning away. "Why, what has come to you, Dill? Are you afraid my nerves are growing delicate, or that I shall faint over the loss of a hundred pounds? At the very most, we shall not suffer beyond that extent."

Old Dill turned back again. "If I don't believe you are speaking of the failure of Kent and Green! It's not *that*, Mr. Archibald. They won't affect us much; and there'll be a dividend, report runs."

"What is it, then?"

"Then you have not heard it, sir! I am glad that I'm in time. It might not have been well for you to have seen it without a word of preparation, Mr. Archibald."

"If you have not gone demented, you will tell me what you mean, Dill, and leave me to my letters," cried Mr. Carlyle, wondering excessively at his sober, matter-of-fact clerk's words and manner.

Old Dill laid his hand upon the *Times* newspaper. "It's here, Mr. Archibald, in the column of the deaths: the first on the list. Please prepare yourself a little, before you look at it."

He shuffled out quickly, and Mr. Carlyle as quickly unfolded the paper. It was as old Dill said, the first on the list of deaths.

"At Caumont, France, on the 18th inst., Isabel Mary, only child of William, late Earl of Mount Severn."

Clients called; Mr. Carlyle's bell did not ring; an hour or two passed, and old Dill protested that Mr. Carlyle was engaged, until he could protest no longer. He went in deprecatingly. Mr. Carlyle sat yet with the newspaper before him, and the letters unopened at his elbow.

"There's one or two who *will* come in, Mr. Archibald, who *will* see you: what am I to say?"

Mr. Carlyle stared at him for a moment, as if his wits had been in the next world. Then he swept the newspaper from before him, and was the calm, collected man of business again.

As the news of Lady Isabel's marriage had first come to the knowledge of Lord Mount Severn through the newspapers, so, singularly to say, did the tidings of her death. The next post brought him the letter which his wife had tardily forwarded. But, unlike Lady Mount Severn, he did not take her death so entirely upon trust: he knew what mistakes are often made in these reports from a distance, and he deemed it incumbent on him to make inquiries. He wrote immediately to the authorities of the town (in the best French he could muster), asking for particulars, and whether she was really dead.

He received, in due course, a satisfactory answer, satisfactory in so far as that it set his doubts entirely at rest. He had inquired after her by her proper name and title, "La Dame Isabelle Vane," and as the

authorities could find none of the survivors owning that name, they took it for granted she was dead. They wrote him word that the child and nurse whom he had mentioned were killed on the spot; two ladies, who had occupied the same compartment of the carriage, had since died, one of whom was no doubt the mother, the lady he inquired for. She was dead and buried, and sufficient money had been found upon her person to defray the few necessary expenses. It will easily be understood that the lady of whom they spoke was one of those who had been in the same carriage as Lady Isabel's, and who had died.

Thus, through no intention of Lady Isabel, news of her death went forth to Lord Mount Severn and to the world. Her first intimation that she was regarded as dead, was through a copy of that very day's *Times*, seen by Mr. Carlyle, seen by Lord Mount Severn. An English traveller, who had been amongst the sufferers, and lay in the hospital, received the English newspapers, and sometimes lent them to her to read. She was not travelling under her own name; she left that behind her when she left Grenoble; she had rendered her own too notorious to risk the chance recognition of travellers; and the authorities did not suspect that the quiet, unobtrusive Madame Vane, slowly recovering at the hospital, was the Dame Isabelle Vane, respecting whom the great English Comte had written.

Lady Isabel understood at once that the despatching of her letter had been the foundation of the misapprehension; and she began to ask herself now, why she should undeceive Lord Mount Severn and the world. She longed, none knew with what intense longing, to be unknown, obscure, unrecognized by all: none can know it, until they have placed a barrier between themselves and the world as she had done. She had no longer the child to support, she had only herself; and surely she could with ease earn enough for that: or she could starve: it mattered little which. No, there was no necessity for her continuing to accept the bounty of Lord Mount Severn, and she would let him and every one else continue to believe that she was dead, and would be henceforth only Madame Vane. A resolution she adhered to.

Thus the unhappy Lady Isabel's career was looked upon as run. Lord Mount Severn forwarded her letter to Mr. Carlyle, with the confirmation of her death, which he had obtained from the French authorities. It was a nine days' wonder: "That poor, erring Lady Isabel was dead"—people did not call her names in the very teeth of her fate—and then it was over.

It was over. Lady Isabel Vane was as one forgotten.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR AT EAST LYNNE.

THERE went, sailing up the avenue to East Lynne, a lady one windy afternoon. If not a lady she was attired as one: a flounced dress, and a stylish shawl, and a white veil. A very pretty woman, tall and slender was she, and she minced as she walked, and coquettishly swivelled her head, and, altogether, contrived to show that she had quite as

much vanity as brains in her head. She went boldly up to the front entrance of the house, and boldly rang, drawing her white veil over her face as she did so.

One of the men-servants answered it, not Peter ; and, seeing someone very smart before him, bowed deferentially.

"Miss Hallijohn is residing here, I believe. Is she within ?"

"Who, ma'am ?"

"Miss Hallijohn : Miss Joyce Hallijohn," somewhat sharply repeated the lady, as if impatient of any delay. "I wish to see her."

The maid was rather taken to. He had deemed it a visitor to the house, and was prepared to usher her into the drawing-room, at least ; but it seemed it was only a visitor for Joyce. He showed her into a small parlour, and went up to the nursery, where Joyce was sitting with Wilson, — for there had been no change in the domestic department of East Lynne. Joyce remained as upper-maid, partially superintending the servants, attending upon Lucy, and making Miss Carlyle's dresses as usual. Wilson was nurse still. Miss Carlyle had once or twice begun upon the point of extravagance of keeping both Wilson and Joyce ; but Mr. Carlyle had wholly declined discussion upon the subject ; and somehow Miss Carlyle did not find him bend to her will as he once had done.

"Mrs. Joyce, there's a lady asking for you," said the man. "I have shown her into the grey parlour."

"A lady for me ?" repeated Joyce. "Who is it ? Some one to see the children, perhaps ?"

"It's for yourself, I think. She asked for Miss Hallijohn."

Joyce looked at the man : but she put down her work and proceeded to the grey parlour. A pretty woman, vain and dashing, threw up her white veil at her entrance.

"Well, Joyce ! How are you ?"

Joyce always pale, turned paler still, as she gazed in blank consternation. Was it really *Afy* who stood before her ? — Afy the erring.

Afy it was. And she stood there holding out her hand to Joyce with, what Wilson would have called, all the brass in the world. Joyce could not reconcile her mind to link her own with it.

"Excuse me, Afy, but I cannot take your hand. I cannot welcome you here. What could have induced you to come ?"

"If you are going to be upon the high types, it seems I might as well have stayed away," was Afy's reply, given in the pert but good-humoured manner she had ever used to Joyce. "My hand won't damage yours. I am not poison."

"You are looked upon in the neighbourhood as worse than poison, Afy," returned Joyce, in a tone, not of anger, but of sorrow. "Where's Richard Hare ?"

Afy tossed her head. "Where's who ?" asked she.

"Richard Hare. My question was plain enough."

"How should I know where he is ? It's like your impudence to mention him to me. Why don't you ask me where Old Nick is, and how he does ? I'd rather own acquaintance with him, than with Richard Hare, if I'd only my choice between the two."

"Then you have left Richard Hare ! How long since ?"

"I have left—what do you say?" broke off Afy, whose lips were quivering ominously with suppressed passion. "Perhaps you'll condescend to explain. I don't understand."

"When you left here, Afy, did you not go after Richard Hare?—did you not join him?"

"I'll tell you what it is, Joyce," finished Afy, her face indignant and her voice passionate; "I have put up with some things from you in my time, but human nature has its limits of endurance, and I won't bear *that*. I have never set eyes on Richard Hare since that night of horror. I wish I could: I'd help to hang him."

Joyce paused. The belief that Afy was with him had been long and deeply imbibed within her; it was the long-continued and firm conviction of all West Lynne: and a scolded belief is not easily shaken. Was Afy telling her truth? She knew her propensity for making false statements when they served to excuse herself.

"Afy," she said at length, "let me understand you. When you left this place, was it not to share Richard Hare's flight? Have you not been living with him?"

"No," burst forth Afy, with kindling eyes. "Living with *him*? with our father's murderer! Shame upon you, Joyce Hallijohn! you must be precious wicked yourself to suppose it!"

"If I have judged you wrongly, Afy, I sincerely beg your pardon. Not only myself, but the whole of West Lynne believed you were with him; and the thought has caused me pain night and day."

"What a cannibal-minded set you must all be, then!" was Afy's indignant rejoinder.

"Not one in the place but thought so, with the exception of Mr. Carlyle," proceeded Joyce. "He has said two or three times to me that he should not think you went after Richard Hare, or were living with him."

"Mr. Carlyle has more sense than all the rest of West Lynne put together," complacently observed Afy. "Living with Richard Hare! why, I'd rather go and live with a red Indian who gocs about tattooed, and keeps sixteen wives."

"But, Afy, where did you go, then? Why did you leave at all?"

"Never mind why. It was not to be supposed that I could stop at home in the cottage with ghosts and dreams and all those sort of things that attend a place where murder has been."

"What have you been 'doing ever since? Where have you been?"

"Never mind, I say," repeated Afy. "West Lynne has not been so complimentary to me, it appears, that I need put myself out of my way to satisfy its curiosity. I knocked about a bit at first, but I soon settled down as steady as Old Time; as steady as you are."

"Are you married?" inquired Joyce, noting the word "settled."

"Catch me marrying," retorted Afy; "I like my liberty too well. Not but what I might be induced to change my condition, if anythang very eligible turned up: it must be very eligible, though, to tempt me. I am what I suppose you call yourself—a lady's maid."

"Indeed!" said Joyce, much relieved. "And are you comfortable, Afy?—are you in a good service?"

"Middling for that. The pay's not amiss—but there's a great deal to

do, and her ladyship's a Tartar. I had a good one with an old lady; a sort of companion I was to her, and stopped there till she died. What do you think? She made me go in to prayers with her, and read the Bible night and morning."

"How very glad I am to hear this!" exclaimed Joyce. "It must have been so good for you."

"Very," assented Afy; and Joyce failed to detect the irony of her tone. "She had used to read a chapter, and I used to read a chapter, and then we went to prayers. Edifying, wasn't it?"

"Delightfully so, Afy. I am sure you must have profited by it."

"Law, yes: never doubt that. She left me thirty pounds when she diod, over and above my salary. I used to like the Psalms best, because they were short and comforting."

"So comforting!" echoed Joyce. "Afy, I shall love you and be proud of you again, as I was when you first came homie to us."

Afy laughed, a ringing laugh. "You and West Lynne always set me down for worse than I was. Though it poses me to imagine what on earth could have induced you to fancy I should go off with that Dick Hare," she added, for she could not forget the grievance.

"Look at the circumstances," argued Joyce. "You both disappeared."

"But not together!"

"Nearly together. There were ouly a few intervening days. And you had neither money nor friends."

"You don't know what I had. But I would rather have died of want on my father's grave, than have shared his means," continued Afy, growing passionate again. "And you and the West Lynne idiots ought to have made sure of that."

"If you had but dropped me a single line. Afy, it would have put a different aspect upon the whole affair. Your silence helped to mis-judge you."

"Misjudge me, indeed! Why, I never cared for Dick Hare. He was only half baked."

"You encouraged him to the house."

"Well—I don't deny it. He used to speak to me of marriage: and one would put up with a man not baked at all, to be made a real lady. Had I known he was to turn out as he did, I would have seen his coffin walk, before I'd ever have spoken to him. Where is he? Not hung, or I should have heard of it."

"He has never been seen since that night, Afy."

"Nor heard of?"

"Nor heard of! Most people think he is in Australia, or some other foreign land."

"The best place for him; the more distance he puts between him and home, the better. If he ever does come back, I hope he'll get his deserts—which is a rrop's end. I'd go to his hanging."

"You are as bitter against him as Mr. Justice Hare. He would bring his son back to suffer, if he could."

"A cross-grained old camel!" remarked Afy, in allusion to the qualities, social and amiable, of the revered justice. "I don't defend Dick Hare, I hate hin too much for that, but if his father had treated him differently, Dick might have been different also. Well, let's talk of

something else ; the subject invariably gives me the shivers. Who is mistress here?"

" Miss Carlyle."

" Oh. I might have guessed that. Is she as fierce as ever?"

" There is little alteration in her."

" And there won't be on this side the grave. I say, Joyce, I don't want to encounter her ; she might set on at me, as she has done many a time in the old days. Little love was there lost between me and Corny Carlyle."

" You need not fear meeting her. She is away : gone to Lynne-borough for a week's visit."

" That's good news for a rainy day! Then, who acts as mistress while she's absent?"

" I give the orders," said Joyce. " Master interferes very little."

" Will he marry again?" went on Afy.

" How can I tell? There appears no probability of it at present. A few weeks or months ago, a rumour arose that he was to marry Miss Louisa Dohede ; but it died away again."

" Louisa Dohede ! one of that ugly old baronet's daughters?"

" Yes. But Sir John Dohede is not ugly."

" Not ugly ! why he has a nose as long as a foundry chimney. Well, one would think Mr. Carlyle had had enough of marrying."

" Lady Isabel is dead," interrupted Joyce, hastily.

" So is Queen Anne. What is the good of telling me news that all the world knows?"

" I reminded you that she was dead that you might not speak against her," said Joyce. " Whatever may have been Lady Isabel's failings, they are buried in her grave."

" Buried or not, their remembrance lasts," cried Afy ; " and you may as well try to stop the sun's shining, as to stop folks giving their opinions. East Lynne must have been well rid of her!"

Joyce put up her hand. " Afy, be silent! You have no right so to speak of Lady Isabel : you know nothing of the facts."

" I know all the facts by heart," imperturbably rejoined Afy. " You may take your oath they were conned over and over by us at Lady Mount Severn's?"

Joyce looked at her in surprise. " What have you to do with Lady Mount Severn?"

" Well, that's good. It's where I am in service."

" At Lady Mount Severn's?"

" Why not! I have been there two years. It is not a great deal longer I shall stop, though ; she has too much vinegar in her for me. It happened just after I went there, and she had a cousin visiting her, a Miss Levison, and the two were for ever talking of it."

" But not in your presence?"

" I heard," significantly nodded Afy. " Heard just as much as they had to tell."

" You must have listened at keyholes?"

" Perhaps I did," was Afy's cool response. " I had a fancy to hear the particulars ; and when I do make up my mind to know a thing, I don't let trifles stand in my way. Tell me about her, Joyce."

Joyce shook her head. "There's nothing much to tell. She was one of the sweetest ladies, one of the kindest mistresses—"

"Oh, I see," interrupted Afy, with insatiable disdain. "She was one of your angels."

"Almost she was. Until that serpent came here to cross her path."

"Manners & manners!" laughed Afy. "It's not polite to call names."

"I could tell her names for ever," warmly answered Joyce. "And so I would if it could bring him punishment. It will come home to him; mark my words."

"Lady Mount Severn throws all the blame on her."

"It is more than Lord Mount Severn does," angrily returned Joyce.

"I could have told you that. He casts some share of it to Lady Mount Severn. Sir Francis is her cousin, you know. Was she good-looking, Joyce?"

"Beautiful."

"Better-looking than I am!" cried vain Afy, glancing at herself in an opposite mirror.

"Oh, Afy! how absurd you are!"

"Many thanks. Because she was the Lady Isabel, and I am plain Afy Halljohn, of course I can't be compared to her! Everybody thinks they may lance shafts at me: but lady angels go wrong sometimes, you see; they are not universally immaculate. She must have been a queer angel, rather, to leave her children."

"Afy, do you understand that this conversation is particularly disagreeable to me!" cried Joyce with spirit.

"It's a very disagreeable topic indeed, I should say," equably replied Afy. "She should not have acted so as to give rise to it. He soon tired of her, with all her beauty: he has tired—as it is said—of others. He is married now."

"Yes," indignantly spoke Joyce, "and the wonder is, how any young lady, with a spark of delicacy or good feeling, could bring herself to marry so notorious a man."

"Ladies don't dislike that sort of notoriety," said Afy, laughing at Joyce's reproving face. "That is, when the offenders are as handsome as he is."

"You have seen him at Lord Mount Severn's?"

"Not I. I have seen him, but not there. Since the Carlyle affair, he dare not show his face within their doors: my lord would kick him out. What an awful thing that railway accident must have been!"

Joyce shuddered. "Ay, it was an awful death."

"And quite a judgment upon her, I should say," went on Afy, probably seeing that the style of conversation aggravated Joyce.

Joyce would stand it no longer. "Listen, Afy: I loved my mistress, and I love her memory still, in spite of what has taken place. If you are to speak against her, it must be in some other house, for it shall not be in Mr. Carlyle's, where she was once so honoured."

"Have it your own way," indifferently rejoined Afy. "She's gone to kingdom come, so it's not worth while disputing over it. Is Mr. Carlyle at home?"

"He will be home to dinner, I dare say you would like some tea: you shall come and take it with me and Wilson in the nursery."

"I was thinking you might have the grace to offer me something," cried Afy. "I meant to sleep till to-morrow in the neighbourhood; my lady gave me two days' holiday—for she was going to see her dear old grandmother, where she can't take a maid—and I thought I'd use it in coming to have a look at the old place again. Don't stare at me in that blank way, as if you feared I should ask the grand loan of a bed here. I shall sleep at the Mount Severn Arms."

"I was not glancing at such a thought, Afy. Come and take your bonnet off."

"Is the nursery full of children?"

"There's only one child in it. Miss Lucy and Master William are with the governess."

Wilson received Afy with lofty condescension, having Richard Hare in her thoughts. But Joyce explained that it was all a misapprehension—that her sister had not been near Richard Hare, but was as indignant against him as they were. Upon which Wilson grew cordial and chatty, rejoicing in the delightful recitation her tongue would enjoy that evening.

Afy's account of herself, as to past proceedings, was certainly not the most satisfactory in the world, but altogether, taking in the present, it was so great an improvement upon Joyce's conclusions, that she had not felt so elated for many a day. When Mr. Carlyle returned home, Joyce sought him, and acquainted him with what had happened. Afy had turned up; was maid to Lady Mount Severn; and, above all, that she had never been with Richard Hare.

"Ah! you remember what I said, Joyce," he remarked. "I did not believe Afy was with Richard Hare."

"I have been telling Afy so, sir, and she says you have more sense than all West Lynne put together."

Mr. Carlyle laughed.

"A terrible way she was in, to be sure, when I informed her what people had believed," continued Joyce. "She almost went into one of her old passions."

"Does she seem steady, Joyce?"

"I think so, sir—steady for her. Before she took Lady Mount Severn's service, she was with an old lady, where she read her Bible and joined in prayers night and morning."

"Afy at prayers!" exclaimed Mr. Carlyle, a smile crossing his lips. "I hope they were genuine."

"I was thinking, sir, that as she appears to have turned out so respectable, and is with Lady Mount Severn, you perhaps might see no objection to her sleeping here for to-night. It would be better than for her to go to an inn, as she talks of doing."

"None at all," replied Mr. Carlyle. "Let her remain."

As Joyce returned to the nursery, Afy and Wilson were in the full flowing tide of talk. An unlucky sentence of Afy's caught Joyce's ears.

"It's as true as you are there, Wilson. She bothered me all day long with her religion. I used to pick out the shortest psalm I could find, and when she asked the why, I said I did it that I might remember them. There's one with two verses in it; I chose that, as often as I dared. And then, down I had to go on my knees, and I used to wish my mistress and her praye somewhere."

Joyce groaned in spirit, and thought of the words just spoken by Mr. Carlyle—he had hoped the prayers were genuine!

Later in the evening, after Mr. Carlyle's dinner, a message came that Afy was to go to him. Accordingly she proceeded to his presence.

"Se, Afy, you have returned to let West Lynne know that you are alive. Sit down."

"West Lynne may go a-walking in future, sir, for all the heed I shall take of it," retorted Afy. "A set of wicked-minded scoundrelmongers, to take and say I had gone off after Richard Hare!"

"You should not have gone off at all, Afy."

"Well, sir, that was my business, and I chose to go. I could not stop in the cottage after that night's work."

"There is a mystery attaching to that night's work, Afy," observed Mr. Carlyle: "a mystery that I cannot fathom. Perhaps you can help me out with it."

"What mystery, sir?" returned Afy.

Mr. Carlyle leaned forward, his arms on the table; Afy had taken a chair at the other end of it. "Who was it that committed the murder?" he demanded, in a grave and somewhat imperative tone.

Afy stared some moments before she replied, evidently astonished at the question. "Who committed the murder, sir?" she uttered at length. "Richard Hare committed it. Everybody knows that."

"Did you see it done?"

"No," replied Afy. "If I had seen it, the fright and horror would have killed me. Richard Hare quarrelled with my father, and drew the gun upon him in his passion."

"You assume this to have been the case, Afy, as others have assumed it. I do not think it was Richard Hare who killed your father."

"Not Richard Hare!" exclaimed Afy, after a pause. "Then who do you think did it, sir? I?"

"Nonsense, Afy."

"I know he did it," proceeded Afy. "It is true that I did not see it done, but I know it, for all that. I *know* it, sir."

"You cannot know it, Afy."

"I do know it, sir; I would not assert it to you if I did not. If Richard Hare were here present before us, and swore till he was black in the face that it was not he, I could convict him."

"By what means?"

"I had rather not say, sir. But you may believe me, for I am speaking truth."

There was another friend of yours present that evening, Afy. Lieutenant Thorn."

Afy's face turned crimson: she was evidently confused. But Mr. Carlyle's words and manner were authoritative, and she saw that it would be useless to attempt to trifling with him.

"I know he was, sir. A young fellow, who used to ride over some evenings to see me. He had nothing to do with what occurred."

"Where did he ride from?"

"He was stopping with some friends at Swainson. He was nobody, sir."

"What was his name?" questioned Mr. Carlyle.

"Thorn," said Afy.

"I mean his real name. Thorn was an assumed one."

"Oh dear, no," returned Afy. "Thorn was his name."

Mr. Carlyle paused and looked at her.

"Afy, I have reason to believe that Thorn was only an assumed name. Now, I have a motive for wishing to know his real one; and you would very much oblige me by confiding it to me. What was it?"

"I don't know that he had any other name, sir; I am sure he had no other," persisted Afy. "He was Lieutenant Thorn then, and he was Captain Thorn afterwards."

"You have seen him since?"

"Once in a way we have met."

"Where is he now?"

"Now! Oh, my goodness, I don't know anything about him now!" said Afy. "I have not heard of him or seen him for a long while. I think I heard something about his going to India with his regiment."

"What regiment is he in?"

"I'm sure I don't know about that," said Afy. "Is not one regiment the same as another: they are all in the army, aren't they, sir?"

"Afy, I must find this Captain Thorn. Do you know anything of his family?"

Afy shook her head. "I don't think he had any. I never heard him mention so much as a brother or a sister."

"And you persist in saying his name was Thorn!"

"I persist in it because it was his name. I am positive it was his name."

"Afy, shall I tell you why I want to find him? I believe that it was he who murdered your father: not Richard Hare."

Afy's mouth and eyes gradually opened, and her face turned hot and cold alternately. Then passion mastered her, and she burst forth.

"It's a lie! I beg your pardon, sir, but whoever told you that, told you a lie. Thorn had no more to do with it, than I had: I'll swear it."

"I tell you I believe Thorn to have been the man. You were not present: you cannot know who actually did it."

"Yes, I can and do know," said Afy, bursting into tears of hysterical passion. "Thorn was with me when it happened, so it could not have been Thorn. It was that wicked Richard Hare. Sir! have I not said that I'll swear it?"

"Thorn was with you!—at the moment of the murder?" repeated Mr. Carlyle.

"Yes, he was," shrieked Afy, nearly beside herself with emotion. "Whoever has been trying to put it off Richard Hare, and on to him, is a wicked, false-hearted wretch. It was Richard Hare and nobody else, and I hope he'll be hung for it yet."

"You are telling me the truth, Afy?" gravely spoke Mr. Carlyle.

"Truth!" echoed Afy, flinging up her hands. "Would I tell a lie over my poor father's death? If Thorn had done it, would I screen him, or shuffle it off to Richard Hare? No, no."

Mr. Carlyle felt uncertain and bewildered. That Afy was sincere in what she said was but too apparent. He spoke again, but Afy had risen from her chair to leave.

"Locksley was in the wood that evening : Otway Bethel was in it. Could either of them have seen the culprit?"

"No, sir," firmly retorted Alf ; "the culprit was Richard Hare ; and I'd say it with my kindest regards. I'd say it because I know it—though I don't ~~want~~ need to say how I know it; time enough when he gets taken."

She quitted the room, leaving Mr. Carlyle in a state of puzzled bewilderment. Was he to believe Alf? or was he to believe the past assertion of Richard Hare?

CHAPTER XVI.

A NIGHT INVASION OF EAST LYNNE.

In one of the comfortable sitting-rooms at East Lynne sat Mr. Carlyle and his sister one inclement January night. The contrast within and without was great. The warm, blazing fire, the handsome carpet on which it flickered, the exceedingly comfortable arrangement of the furniture of the room, and the light of the chandelier which fell on all, presented a picture of homie peace, though it may not have deserved the name of luxury. Without, heavy flakes of snow were falling thickly, rendering the atmosphere so dense and obscure, that a man could not see a yard before him. Mr. Carlyle had driven home in the pony-carriage, and the snow had so settled upon him, even in that short journey, that Lucy, who happened to see him as he entered the hall, screamed out laughingly that her papa had turned into a white man. It was now later in the evening, the children were in bed, the governess was in her own sitting-room—it was not often that Mrs. Carlyle invited her to theirs of an evening—and the house was quiet. Mr. Carlyle was deep in the pages of one of the monthly periodicals; and Miss Carlyle sat on the other side of the fire, grumb'ing, and sniffing, and choking.

Miss Carlyle was one of your strong-minded ladies, who never condescend to be ill. Of course, had she been attacked with scarlet fever, or paralysis, or St. Vitus's dance, she must have given in to the enemy; but trifling ailments, such as headache, influenza, sore-throat, which other people have, passed her by. Imagine, therefore, her exasperation at finding her head heavy, her chest sore, and her voice going—in short, at having, for once in her life, caught cold like ordinary mortals.

"It was that ale," she groaned.

"Ale!" echoed Mr. Carlyle, lifting his eyes from his book.

"Yes, the ale," she curtly proceeded. "Dear me, Archibald, you need not stare as if I had said it was the moon gave it me."

"But how could ale give it you? Unless you drank a great draught of it when you were in a state of perspiration."

Miss Carlyle lifted her hands in pitying contempt for his ignorance.

"You'll be a baby in common sense to the end of your life, Archibald. When do I drink great draughts of ale? Pray, the last two

barrels that we have had in tap, has there not been, throughout, a complaint that the taps leaked?"

"Well?" said he.

"Well, I knew the fact by putting in the taps in the circumstance; servants are such impudent. So, when Peter came to me after breakfast this morning, and said another barrel of ale had been left tapped, for that the one in hand was steeped yesterday, 'Very well,' said I, 'I'll come and see to it myself!' And down I went out of those warm rooms, and the cellar struck like an ice-house, and I stayed down for a good twenty minutes."

"Does it take all that time to tap a barrel of ale?"

"No, it doesn't take it when things are in order, but it does when you have to bother over the taps, rejecting one, rejecting another," responded Miss Carlyle, in a tone of exasperation. "And a pretty state that cellar was in! not a thing in place. I had the cook down, and a sharp dressing I gave her. If her hands had been turned for three days, I'll eat them, uncooked as they are! And that's how I must have caught this cold."

Mr. Carlyle made no observation. Had he told her that there was no need whatever for her interference, that Peter was perfectly competent to perform his duties, she would only have flown at him. He became absorbed in his book again, while Miss Carlyle fretted and grunted, and drew her chair to the fire and pushed it back again, and made violent starts with her hands and feet; in short, performed all the antics of a middle-aged gentlewoman suffering under an attack of fidgets.

"What's the time, I wonder?" she exclaimed, b*u*-and by.

Mr. Carlyle looked at his watch. "It is just nine, Cornelia."

"Then I think I shall go to bed. I'll have a basin of arrowroot or gruel, or some slop of that sort, after I'm in it. I'm sure I have been free enough all my life from requiring such sick dishes!"

"Do so," said Mr. Carlyle. "It may do you good."

"There's one thing excellent for a cold in the head, I know. It's to double your flannel petticoat crossways, or any other large piece of flannel you may have at hand, and put it on over your nightcap. I'll try it."

"I would," said Mr. Carlyle, smothering an irreverent laugh.

She sat on five minutes longer, and then left, wishing Mr. Carlyle good night. He resumed his reading. But another page or two concluded the article, upon which Mr. Carlyle threw the book on the table, rose, and stretched himself, as if tired of sitting.

He stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, and stood on the hearthrug. "I wonder if it snows still?" he exclaimed to himself.

Proceeding to the window, one of those opening to the ground, he partly drew aside the warm crimson curtain. It all looked dull and dark outside; Mr. Carlyle could see little what the weather was, and he opened the window and stepped half out.

The snow was falling faster and thicker than ever. Not at that did Mr. Carlyle start with surprise, if not with a more unpleasant sensation; but, at feeling a man's hand touch his, and finding a man's face almost in contact with his own.

"Let me come in, Mr. Carlyle, for the love of life! I see you are alone. I'm dead beat: and I don't know but I am dodged also."

The tones struck familiarly on Mr. Carlyle's ear. He drew back mechanically; a thousand perplexing sensations overwhelmed him; and the man followed him into the room. A white man, as Lucy had called her father. Ay, for he had been hours and hours on foot in the snow: his hat, clothes, eyebrows, false whiskers, all were white. "Lock the door, sir," were his first words. Need you be told that it was Richard Hare?

Mr. Carlyle fastened the window, drew the heavy curtain across it, and turned rapidly to lock the two doors, for there were two to the room, one leading into the adjoining room. Richard, meanwhile, took off his wet smock-frock—the old smock-frock of former memory—his hat, and his false whiskers, shaking the snow from the latter with his hand.

"Richard," uttered Mr. Carlyle, "I am thunderstruck. I fear you have done wrong to come here."

"I cut off from London at a moment's notice," replied Richard, who was literally shivering with cold. "I'm dodged, Mr. Carlyle; I am indeed; the police are after me, set on by that wretch, Thorn."

Mr. Carlyle turned to the sideboard and poured out a wine glass of brandy. "Take it, Richard: it will warm you."

"I'd rather have it in some hot water, sir."

"But how am I to get hot water brought in? Drink this now. Why, how you tremble!"

"Ah. A few hours outside in that cold snow is enough to make the strongest man tremble, sir. And it lies so deep in some places that you have to come along at a snail's pace. But I'll tell you about this business. A fortnight ago, I was at a cab-stand at the West-end, talking to a cab-driver, when some drops of rain came down. A gentleman and lady were passing at the time, but I had not paid any attention to them. 'By Jove!' I heard him exclaim to her, 'I think we are going to have pepper. We had better take a cab my dear.' With that, the man I was talking to swung open the door of his cab, and she got in—such a fair young girl! I turned to look at him, and you might just have knocked me down with astonishment. Mr. Carlyle: it was the man Thorn."

"Indeed!"

"You thought I might be mistaken in him that moonlight night; but there was no mistaking him in broad daylight. I looked him full in the face, and he looked at me. He turned as white as a sheet: perhaps I did; I don't know."

"Was he well dressed?"

"Very. Oh, there's no mistaking his position. That he moves in the higher circles, is undoubtedly. The cab drove away, and I got up behind it. The driver thought boys were there, and turned his head and his whip, but I made him a sign. We didn't go much more than the length of a street. I was on the pavement before Thorn was, and looked at him again; and again he went white. I marked the house, thinking it was where he lived, and, and—"

"Why did you not give him into custody, Richard?"

Richard shook his head. "And my proofs of his guilt, Mr. Carlyle? I could bring none against him; no positive proofs. No, I must wait till I can get proofs, to do that. He would turn round upon me now, and swear my life away, to render his secure: perhaps say that he say me commit the murder. Well, I thought I'd ascertain for certain what his name was, and that night I went to the house and got into conversation with one of the servants, who was standing at the door. 'Does Captain Thorn live here?' I asked him. 'Mr. Westerby lives here,' said he; 'I don't know any Captain Thorn.' Then that's his name, thought I to myself. 'A youngish man, isn't he? very smart, with a pretty wife?' 'I don't know what you call youngish,' he laughed, 'my master's turned sixty, and his wife's as old.' That checked me. 'Perhaps he has sons?' I asked. 'Not any,' the man answered; 'there's nobody but their two selves.' So, with that, I told him what I wanted — that a lady and gentleman had alighted there in a cab that day, and I wished to know his name. Well, Mr. Carlyle, I could get at nothing satisfactory; the fellow said a great many had called there that day, for his master was just up from a long illness, and people came to see him."

"Is this all, Richard?"

"All! I wish it had been all. I kept looking about for him in all the better streets: I was half mad——"

"Do you not wonder, if he is in this position of life and resides in London, that you have never dropped upon him before?" interrupted Mr. Carlyle.

"No, sir: and I'll tell you why. I have been afraid to show myself in those better parts of the town, fearing I might meet some I used to know at home who would recognize me; so I have kept chiefly to obscure places: stables, and so forth. I had gone up to the West-end this day on a matter of business."

"Well, go on with your story."

"In a week's time I came upon him again. It was at night. He was coming out of one of the theatres, and I went up and stood before him. 'What do you want, fellow?' he asked. 'I have seen you watching me before this.' 'I want to know your name,' I said, 'that's enough for me at present.' He flew into a fierce passion, and swore that if he ever caught sight of me near him again, he would hand me into custody. 'And, remember, men are not given into custody for watching others,' he significantly added. 'I know you, and if you have any regard for yourself, you'll keep out of my way.' He entered a private carriage as he spoke, and it drove away. I could see that it had a great coat-of-arms upon it."

"When do you say this happened?"

"A week ago. Well, I could not rest; I was half mad, I say, and I went about still, trying if I could not discover his name and who he was. I did come upon him once: but he was walking quickly, arm in arm with—another man. Again I saw him standing at the entrance to Tattersall's, talking to the same man; and his face turned savage—I believe with fear as much as with anger—when he saw me. He seemed to hesitate, and then—as if acting in a passion—suddenly beckoned to a policeman, pointed me out, and said something to him in a quick

tone. That frightened me, and I slipped away. Two hours later, when I was in quite a different part of the town, in turning my head, I saw the same policeman following me. I bolted under the horses of a passing vehicle, cut into turnings and passages, through into another street, and got up behind a cabman who was on his box, driving a fare. I reached my lodgings in safety, as I thought; but, happening to glance into the street, there I saw the man again, standing opposite, and reconnoitring the house. I had gone home hungry, but this took all my hunger away from me. I opened the box where I kept my disguise, put it on, and got out by a back way. I have been pretty nearly ever since on my feet, coming here; getting a lift only now and then."

"But Richard, do you know that West Lynne is the very worst place you could have flown to? It has come to light that you were here before, disguised as a farm labourer."

"Who the deuce betrayed that?" ejaculated Richard.

"I am unable to tell you; I cannot even imagine. The rumour was rife in the place, and it reached your father's ears. That rumour may make people's wits sharper to know you in your disguise, than they otherwise might have been."

"But what was I to do? I was forced to come here first, to get a little money; I shall settle myself in some other big town, far away from London; Liverpool, or Manchester perhaps; and see what employment I can get into; but I must have something to live upon till I can find it. I don't possess a penny piece," drawing out his trouser-pockets for the inspection of Mr. Carlyle. "The last coppers I had, I spent in bread and cheese and half a pint of beer at mid-day. I had been outside that window for more than an hour, sir."

"Indeed!"

"As I neared West Lynne, I began to think what I should do. It was of no use trying to catch Barbara's attention on such a night as this; I had no money to pay for a lodging so I turned off here, hoping I might, by good luck, drop upon you. There was a little division in this window curtain; it had not been drawn quite close; and through it I could see you and Miss Carlyle. I saw her leave the room; I saw you come to the window and open it, and then I spoke. Mr. Carlyle," he added, after a pause, "is this sort of life to go on with me for ever?"

"I am deeply sorry for you, Richard," was the sympathizing answer. "I wish I could remedy it."

Before another word was spoken, the room door was tried, and then gently knocked at. Mr. Carlyle placed his hand on Richard, who looked frightened out of his wits.

"Be still; be at ease, Richard: no one shall come in. It is only Peter."

Not Peter's voice, however, but Joyce's was heard, in response to Mr. Carlyle's demand of who was there.

"Miss Carlyle has left her handkerchief downstairs, sir, and has sent me for it."

"You cannot come in; I am busy," was the answer, delivered in a clear and most decisive tone.

"Who was it?" quivered Richard, as Joyce was heard going away.

"It was Joyce."

"What, is she here still? Has anything ever been heard of Afy, sir?"

"Afy was here herself two or three months ago."

"Was she?" said Richard, beguiled for an instant from the thought of his own dangers. "What is she doing?"

"She is in service as a lady's maid," Richard, I questioned Afy about Thorn. She protested solemnly to me that it was not Thorn who committed the deed; that it could not have been he, for Thorn was with her at the moment of its occurrence."

"It's not true," said Richard. "It was Thorn."

"Richard, you cannot tell: you did not see it done."

"I know that no man could have rushed out in that frantic manner, with those signs of guilt and fear about him, unless he had been engaged in a bad deed," was Richard Hare's answer. "It could have been no one else."

"Afy declares he was with her," repeated Mr. Carlyle.

"Look here, sir: you are a clever man, and folks say I am not, but I can see things, and reason as well as others, perhaps. If Thorn were not Halljohn's murderer, why should he be persecuting me?—what would he care about me? And why should his face turn livid, as it has done, each time he has seen my eyes upon him? Whether he committed the murder or whether he didn't, he must know that I did not, because he came upon me, waiting, as he was tearing from the cottage."

Dick's reasoning was not unsound.

"Another thing," he resumed. "Afy swore at the inquest that she was *alone* when the deed was done: that she was alone in the wood at the back of the cottage, and knew nothing about it till afterwards. How could she have sworn she was alone, if Thorn was with her?"

The fact had escaped Mr. Carlyle's memory in his conversation with Afy, or he would not have failed to point out the discrepancy, and to inquire how she could reconcile it. Yet her assertion to him had been most positive and solemn. There were difficulties in the matter which he could not reconcile.

"Now that I have overcome my passion for Afy, I can see her faults, Mr. Carlyle. She'd no more stick at an untruth than she'd stick——"

A most awful thundering at the room door, loud enough to bring the very house down. No officers of justice, searching for a fugitive, ever made more noise. Richard Hare, his face turned white, his eyes starting, and his own light hair bustling with horror, struggled into his wet smock-frock, forced on his hat and its false whiskers, looked round in a bewildered manner for some cupboard or mouse-hole to creep into, and, seeing none, rushed to the fireplace and placed his foot on the fender. That he purposed an attempt at chimney climbing was evident, though how the fire would have agreed with him, poor Dick appeared completely to ignore. Mr. Carlyle drew him back, keeping his calm, powerful hand upon his shoulder, while certain sounds in an angry voice were jerked through the keyhole.

"Richard, be a man; put aside this weakness this fear. Have I not told you that harm shall not come near you in my house?"

"It may be that officer from London ! he may have brought half a dozen more with him," gasped unhappy Richard. "I said they might have dodged me all the way here."

"Nonsense. Sit down, and be at rest. It is only Cornelia : and she will be as anxious to shield you from danger as I can be."

"Is it ?" cried relieved Richard. "Can't you make her keep out?" he continued, his teeth still chattering.

"No, that I cannot, if she has a mind to come in," was the candid answer. "You remember what she was, Richard : she has not altered."

Knowing that to speak on this side the door to his sister, when she was in one of her resolute moods, would be of no manner of use, Mr. Carlyle opened the door, dexterously swung himself through it, and shut it after him. There she stood ; in a towering passion, too.

But, a word, as to what brought her there. Miss Carlyle had gone up to bed, taking her cold with her, ordered her gruel, and forthwith proceeded to attire herself for the night, beginning with her head. Her day-cap off, and her nightcap on, of the remarkable form of which the reader once had the opportunity of taking the pattern, she next considered about the flannel. Finding a piece some three yards square, she contrived to muffle it over all : but the process was long and difficult, for the flannel was perverse. The result was such that I only wish her picture could have been taken, and placed in the British Museum. A pyramid rose on the crown of her head, and a couple of flannel corners flapped over her forehead ; the sides resembled nothing so much as a judge's wig.

Now, during this ceremony—before settling on of the flannel ornament, or she could not have heard—it had struck Miss Carlyle that certain sounds, as of talking, proceeded from the room beneath, which she had just quitted. She possessed a remarkably keen sense of hearing : though, indeed, none of her faculties were wanting in the quality of keenness. The servants, Joyce and Peter excepted, would not be convinced but that she must "listen" : but, in that, they did her injustice. At first she believed her brother must be reading aloud to himself ; but she soon decided otherwise. "Who on earth has he in there with him ?" said Miss Carlyle aloud.

The head-dress arranged, she rang her bell. Joyce answered it.

"Who is with your master ?"

"Nobody, ma'am."

"But I say there is. I can hear talking."

"I don't think anybody can be with him," persisted Joyce. "And the walls of this house are too well built, ma'am, for sounds from the downstair's rooms to penetrate up here."

"That's all you know about it," cried Miss Carlyle. "When talking goes on in that room, there's a certain sound given out which does penetrate here, and which my ears have grown accustomed to. Go and see who it is. I believe I left my handkerchief on the table : you can bring it up."

Joyce departed, and Miss Carlyle proceeded to take off her things ; her dress first, her silk petticoat next. She had arrived as far as the flannel petticoat when Joyce returned.

"Yes, ma'am, som' one is talking with master. I could not go

in, for the door was bolted, and my master called out that he was busy."

Food for Miss Carlyle. She, feeling sure that no visitor had come to the house, ran her thoughts rapidly over the members of the household, and came to the conclusion that it must be the governess, Miss Manning, who had dared to closet herself with Mr. Carlyle. This unlucky governess was pretty, and Miss Carlyle had been cautious to keep her and her prettiness very much out of her brother's sight : she knew the attraction he would present to her vision, or to those of any other governess. Oh yes ; it was Miss Manning ; she had stolen in, believing that she, Miss Carlyle, was safe for the night ; but she'd just unearthen my lady. And what in the world could possess Archibald ?—to lock the door !

Looking round for something warm to throw over her shoulders, catching up an article that looked as much like a green baize table-cover as anything else, and throwing it on, down stalked Miss Carlyle. And in this trim Mr. Carlyle beheld her when he came out.

"Who have you got in that room ?" she curtly asked.

"It is some one on business," was his prompt reply. "Cornelia, you cannot go in."

She very nearly laughed. "Not go in!"

"Indeed it is much better that you should not do so. Pray go back. You will make your cold worse, standing here."

"Now I want to know whether you are not ashamed of yourself?" she deliberately pursued. "You ! a married man, with children in your house ! I'd rather have believed anything downright wicked of myself, than of you, Archibald."

Mr. Carlyle stared.

"Come ; I'll have her out. And out of this house she tramps to-morrow morning. A couple of audacious ones, to be in there with the door locked, the moment you thought you had got rid of me ! Stand aside, I say, Archibald : I will enter."

Mr. Carlyle never felt more inclined to laugh. And to Miss Carlyle's extreme discomposure, she, at this juncture, saw the governess emerge from the grey parlour, glance at the hall clock, and retire again.

"Why : she's there !" she uttered. "I thought she was with you."

"Miss Manning locked in with me ! Is that your mare's nest, Cornelia ? I think your cold must have obscured your reason."

"Well, I shall go in all the same. I tell you, Archibald, that I will see who is there."

"If you persist in going in, you must go. But allow me to warn you that you will find tragedy in that room, not comedy. There is no woman in it ; but there is a man ; a man who came in through the window, like a hunted stag ; a man upon whom a ban is set, and who fears the police are upon his track. Can you guess his name ?"

It was Miss Carlyle's turn to stare now. She opened her dry lips to speak, but they closed again.

"It is Richard Hare, your kinsman. There's not a roof in the wide world open to him this bitter night."

She said nothing. A long pause of dismay, and then she motioned to have the door opened.

" You will not show yourself in—in that guise?"

" Not show myself in this guise to Richard Hare—whom I have whipping'd—when he was a child—two times in a day! I stand on ceremony with him. I dare say the looks no better than I do! But it's nothing short of impudent, Archibald, for him to come here!"

He left her to enter, telling her to lock the door as soon as she was inside, and went into the adjoining room, which, by another door, opened to the one Richard was in. There he rang the bell. It was answered by a footman.

" Send Peter to me."

" Lay supper here, Peter, for two," began Mr. Carlyle, when the old servant appeared. " A person is with me on business. What have you in the house?"

" Spiced beef, sir: some home-made pork-pies, and—"

" That will do," said Mr. Carlyle. " Put a jug of ale on the table, and everything likely to be wanted. And then the household can go to bed; we may be late, and the things can be removed in the morning. Oh—and, Peter,—none of you must come near the rooms, this or the next, under any pretence whatever, unless I ring, for I shall be too busy to be disturbed."

" Very well, sir. Shall I serve the ham also?"

" The ham?"

" I beg pardon, sir; I guessed it might be Mr. Dill, and he is fond of our hams."

" Ah, you were always a shrewd guesser, Peter," smiled his master. " He is fond of ham, I know. Yes, you may put it on the table. Don't forget the small kettle."

The consequence of which little finessing on Mr. Carlyle's part was, that Peter announced in the kitchen that Mr. Dill had arrived, and supper was to be served for two. " But what a night for the old gentleman to have trudged through on foot!" ejaculated he.

" And what a trudge he'll have of it back again, for it'll be worse then!" chimed in one of the maids.

When Mr. Carlyle returned to the other room, his sister and Richard Hare had scarcely finished staring at each other. Richard had no doubt seen many a faintly tattered lady in the class amidst whom he had recently lived, but he could scarcely have had the chance to meet one who equalled Miss Carlyle. Sure, two such guys never stood face to face! She black shoes, black stockings, a flannel petticoat that reached to her calves; the nondescript shawl, which, to crown its other virtues, was finished off with jagged fringe; and the unsightly head-dress that was like nothing else on earth! He: in fustian clothes, somewhat short of buttons; the smock-frock half on; the battered hat and the bushy whiskers; with the trembling hands and the white face of terror! I have been at many a carnival abroad, but I assure you that I never saw amongst the maskers a couple equal to the spectacle those two would have presented, in a triumphal carnival car, say at Nice or Rome.

" Please look the door, Miss Cornelia," began poor shivering Dick, when he had feasted his eyes upon her.

" The doctor's looked," quipped she. " But, what on earth brought you here, Richard? You must be worse than mad."

"The Bow-street officers were after me in London," he quickly responded, unconsciously using a term which had some familiarity to his boyish years. "I used to run away, without a thing belonging to me; without so much as a clean shirt."

"They must be police officers not to have seen after you before," was the consolatory remark of Miss Carlyle. "Are you going to dance a hornpipe through the streets of West Lynne to-morrow, and proclaim yourself openly?"

"Not if I can help it," replied Richard.

"You might just as well do that, if you come to West Lynne at all, for you can't be here now without being found out. There was a bother about your having been here before: I should like to know how it got abroad."

"The life I lead is dreadful," cried Richard. "I might make up my mind to the work, though that's hard enough, after having been reared a gentleman, but to be in exile, banned, disgraced, afraid to show my face in broad daylight amidst my fellow-men, in dread every hour that the sword may fall! I would almost as soon be dead, as continue to live such a life."

"Well, you have no one to grumble at: you brought it upon yourself," philosophically returned Miss Carlyle, as she opened the door to admit her brother. "You would go hunting after that brazen hussy, Atty, you know, in defiance of all that could be said to you."

"That would not have brought it upon me," said Richard. "It was through that fiend's having killed Halljohn. that was what brought the ban upon me."

"It's a most extraordinary thing, if any one else *did* kill him, that the fact can't be brought to light," retorted Miss Carlyle. "Here you tell a cock-and-bull story of some man having done it—some Thorn; but no one ever saw or heard of him: at the time or since. It looks like a made-up story, Mr. Dick, to whitewash yourself."

"Made up!" panted Richard, in agitation, for it seemed cruel to him, especially in his present frame of mind, to have any doubt cast upon his tale. "It is Thorn who is setting the officers upon me. I have seen him three or four times within the last fortnight."

"And why did you not turn the tables, and set the officers upon him?" demanded Miss Carlyle.

"Because it would lead to no good. Where's the proof, except my bare word, that he committed the murder?"

Miss Carlyle rubbed her nose. "Dick Hare," said she.

"Well?"

"You know you always were the greatest natural that ever was let loose out of leading-strings."

"I know; I was always told so."

"And it's what you always will be. If I were accused of committing a crime, which I knew another had committed, and not myself, should I be such an idiot as not to give that other into custody, if I had the chance? If you were not in such a slavery, shaky state, I would treat you to a bit of my mind: you may rely upon that."

"He was in league with Atty at that period," pursued Richard; "a deceitful, bad man; and he carries it in his countenance. And he

must be in league with her still, if she asserts that he was in her company at the moment the murder was committed. Mr. Carlyle says she does; that she told him so the other day when she was here. He never was; and it was he, and no other, who did the murder."

"Yes," burst forth Miss Carlyle, for the topic was sure to agitate her; "that brazen Jezebel did presume to come here! She chose her time well: and may thank her lucky stars that I was not at home. Arthibald—he's a fool, too; quite as bad as you are, Dick Hare, in some things—actually suffered her to lodge here for two days! A vain, ill-conducted hussy, given to nothing but finery and folly!"

"Afy said that she knew nothing of Thorn's movements now, Richard, and had not done so for some time," interposed Mr. Carlyle, allowing his sister's compliment to pass in silence. "She heard a rumour, she thought, that he had gone abroad with his regiment."

"So much the better for her, if it is true that she knows nothing of him," was Richard's comment. "I can answer for it that he is not abroad, but in England."

"And where are you going to lodge to-night?" abruptly spoke Miss Carlyle, confronting Richard.

"I don't know," was the broken-spirited answer. "If I lie down in a snow-drift and am found frozen in the morning, it won't much matter."

"Was that what you thought of doing?" returned Miss Carlyle.

"No," he mildly said. "What I had thought of doing was to ask Mr. Carlyle for a few shillings, and then I can get a bed somewhere. I know a place where I shall be in safety, two or three miles from this."

"Richard, I would not turn a dog out, to go two or three miles, on such a night," impulsively uttered Mr. Carlyle. "You must stay here."

"Indeed I don't see how he is to get up to a bedroom; or how a room is to be made ready for him, for the matter of that, without betraying his presence to the servants," snapped Miss Carlyle. And poor Richard Hare leaned his aching head upon his hands.

But now, Miss Carlyle's manner was more in fault than her heart. Will it be credited that, before speaking the above ungracious words, before Mr. Carlyle had touched upon the subject, she had been casting about in her busy mind for the best plan of putting up Richard—how it could be accomplished.

"One thing is certain" she resumed. "It will be impossible for you to sleep here without its being known to Joyce. And I suppose you and Joyce are upon the friendly terms of daggers drawn, for she believes you were the murderer of her father."

"Let me disabuse her," interrupted Richard, his pale lips working as he started up. "Allow me to see her and convince her. Mr. Carlyle, why did you not tell Joyce the truth?"

"There's that small room at the back of mine," said Miss Carlyle, returning to the practical part of the subject. "He might sleep there. But Joyce must be taken in to our confidence."

"Joyce had better come in," said Mr. Carlyle. "I will say a word to her first."

He unlocked the door and left the room, Miss Carlyle as jealously locking it again; calling to Joyce, and beckoning her into the adjoining

apartment. He knew that Joyce's faith in the guilt of Richard Hare was confirmed and strong : but he must uproot that belief, if Richard was to be lodged in his house that night.

"Joyce," he began, "you remember how thoroughly imbued with the persuasion you were, that Afy went off after Richard Hare, and was living with him. I several times expressed my doubts upon the point. The fact was, I had positive information that she was not with him, and never had been, though I considered it expedient to keep my information to myself. You are convinced now that she was not with him?"

"Of course I am, sir."

"Well, you see, Joyce, that my opinion would have been worth listening to. Now I am going to try to shake your belief upon another point ; and if I assure you that I have equally good grounds for doing so, you will believe me."

"I am quite certain, sir, that you would state nothing but what is true ; and I know that your judgment is sound," was Joyce's answer.

"Then I must tell you that I do not believe it was Richard Hare who murdered your father."

"Sir!" uttered Joyce, amazed out of her senses.

"I believe Richard Hare to be as innocent of the murder as you or I," he deliberately repeated. "I have had grounds for this opinion, Joyce, for many years."

"Then, sir, who did do it?"

"Afy's other lover. That dandy fellow, Thorn, as I firmly believe."

"And you say you have grounds for this belief, sir?" Joyce asked, after a pause.

"Good grounds : and I tell you I have been in possession of them for years. I should be glad for you to think as I do."

"But, sir,—if Richard Hare was innocent, why did he run away, and keep away?"

"Ah, why indeed ! it is that which has done the mischief. His own weak cowardice was in fault ; he feared to return ; and he felt that he could not remove the odium of suspicion. Joyce, I should like you to see him, and hear his story."

"There is not much chance of that, sir. I dare say he will never venture here again."

"He is here now."

Joyce looked up, considerably startled.

"Here, in this house," repeated Mr. Carlyle. "He has taken shelter in it, and for the few hours that he will remain, we must extend our hospitality and protection to him, concealing him in the best way we can. I thought it well that this confidence should be reposed in you, Joyce. Come now, and see him."

Considering that it was a subdued interview—it was certainly a confused one. Richard talking vehemently, Joyce asking question after question, Miss Carlyle's tongue going as fast as theirs. The only silent one was Mr. Carlyle. Joyce could not refuse to believe protestations so solemn, and her suspicion veered round upon Captain Thorn.

"And now about the bed," interjected Miss Carlyle, impatiently.

"Where's he to sleep, Joyce? The only safe room, that I know of, will be the one through there."

"You can't sleep there, you can't. Don't you know that the key of the door was lost last week, and we cannot open it?"

"So much the better! We'll be all the safer."

"But how is he to get in?"

"To get in? Why, through my room, of course. Does not mine open to it, stupid?"

"Oh, well, shaken, if you would like him to go through yours, that's different."

"Why shouldn't he go through? Do you suppose I mind young Dick Hart? Not I, indeed," she irascibly continued. "I only wish he was young enough for me to flog him as I used to do, that's all: he deserves it as much as any one ever did, pluming the fool as he has done, in all ways. I shall be in bed with curtains drawn, and his passing through won't harm me, and my lying there won't harm him. Stand on ceremony with Dick Hart! What next, I wonder?"

This point being settled, Joyce went to put sheets upon the bed, and Miss Carlyle returned to her own. Mr Carlyle meanwhile took Richard in to supper, helped him abundantly, and made him comfortable. Under the influence of good cheer, a good fire, and a glass of hot brandy and water, which wound up the entertainment, Richard fell asleep in his chair. Not five minutes had he slept, however, when he started up, wild and haggard, beating off, as it were, some imaginary assailant.

"It was not I!" he uttered fearfully and passionately. "It is of no use to take me, for it was not I. It was another, he who——"

"Richard, Richard!" soothingly said Mr Carlyle.

Richard cast his bewildered eyes on to the supper-table, the fire, Mr Carlyle, all reassuring objects to look upon. "I declare, sir, I dreamt that they had taken me. What stupid things dreams are!"

At this moment there came a gentle knock at the door, and Mr. Carlyle opened it. It was Joyce.

"The room is ready, sir," she whispered, "and all the household are in bed."

"Then now is your time, Richard. Good night!"

He stole upstairs after Joyce, who piloted him through Miss Carlyle's room. Nothing could be seen of that lady, though something might be heard: one, given to truth more than politeness, might have called it snoring. Joyce showed Richard his chamber, gave him the candle, and closed the door upon him.

"Poor hunted Richard! good night to you!"

CHAPTER XVII.

BAREARA'S HEART AT REST.

MORNING dawned. The same dull weather, the same heavy fall of snow. Miss Carlyle took her breakfast in bed, an indulgence she had not favoured for e'er so many years. Richard Hart rose, but remained in his chamber, and Joyce carried his breakfast to him.

Mr. Carlyle enquired whilst he was taking his "How did you sleep, Richard?"

"I slept well. I was so dead tired. What are you up to now, Mr. Carlyle? The secret I get away from this old house? I don't feel safe here."

"You must not think of it before evening. I am aware that you cannot remain here, except for a few hours, as it would inevitably become known to the servants. You say you think of going to Liverpool or Manchester?"

"To any large town. they are all alike to me; but one, pursued as I am, is safer in a large place than a small one."

"I am inclined to think that this man, Thornt, only made a show of threatening you, Richard. If he be really the guilty party, his policy must be to keep all in quietness. The very worst thing that could happen for him, would be your arrest."

"Then why molest me? Why send an officer to dodge me?"

"He did not like your molesting him, and he thought he would frighten you. After that day, you would probably have seen no trace of the officer. You may depend upon one thing, Richard - had the policeman's object been to take you, he would have done so - he would not have contented himself with following you about from place to place. Besides, when a detective officer is employed to watch a party, he takes care not to allow himself to be seen. now this man showed himself to you more than once"

"Yes, there's a good deal in that," observed Richard. "For, to one in his class of life, the bare suspicion of such a crime, brought against him, would crush him for ever in the eyes of his equals."

"It is difficult to me, Richard, to believe that he is in the class of life you speak of," observed Mr. Carlyle

"There's no doubt about it; there's none indeed. But that I did not much like to mention the name, for it can't be a pleasant name to you, I should have said last night who I have seen him walking with," continued simple-hearted Richard.

Mr. Carlyle looked inquiringly "Say on, Richard"

"I have seen him, sir, with Sir Francis Levison twice. Once he was talking to him at the door of the betting-rooms, and once they were walking arm in arm. They are apparently upon intimate terms."

At this moment, a loud, angry voice was heard calling from the stairs, and Richard leaped up as if he had been shot. His door—not the one leading to Miss Carlyle's room—opened upon the corridor, and the voice sounded as if its owner were coming in with a bound. It was the voice of Mr. Justice Hale.

"Carlyle, where are you? Hero's a pretty thing happened. Come down."

Mr. Carlyle for once in his life lost his equanimity, and sprang to the door as eagerly as Richard could have done. He forgot that Jayce had said the door was locked and the key mislaid. As to Richard, he rushed on his hat and his whiskers, and hesitated between under the bed and inside the wardrobe.

"Don't agitate yourself, Richard," whispered Mr. Carlyle: "there is no real danger. I will go and keep him safely."

But when Mr. Carlyle passed through his sister's bedroom, he found that lady had taken the initiative, and was leaning over the balustrades, having been arrested in the process of dressing. Her clothes were on, but her nightcap was not off: little cared she, however, who saw her nightcap.

"What on earth brings you up in this weather?" began she in a tone of exasperation.

"I want to see Carlyle. Nice news I have had!"

"What about? Anything concerning Anne, or her family?"

"Anne be bothered!" replied the justice, who was certainly, from some cause, in a furious temper. "It concerns that precious rascal, whom I am forced to call son. I am told he is here."

Down the stairs leaped Mr. Carlyle, four at a time, wound his arm within Mr. Hare's, and led him to a sitting-room.

"Good morning, justice. You had courage to venture up through the snow! What is the matter? you seem excited."

"Excited!" raved the justice, dancing about the room, first on one leg, then on the other, like a cat on hot bricks; "so would you be excited, if your life were worried out, as mine is, over a wicked scamp of a son. Why can't folks trouble their heads about their own business, and let my affairs alone? A pity but what he were hanged, and the thing done with!"

"But what has happened?" questioned Mr. Carlyle.

"Why, this has happened," retorted the justice, throwing a letter on the table. "The post brought me this, just now—and pleasant information it gives me!"

Mr. Carlyle took up the note and read it. It purported to be from "a friend" to Justice Hare, informing that gentleman that his "criminal son" was likely to have arrived at West Lynne, or would arrive in the course of a day or so: and it recommended Mr. Hare to speed his departure from it, lest he should be "pounced upon."

"This letter is anonymous!" exclaimed Mr. Carlyle.

"Of course it is," stamped the justice.

"The only notice I should ever take of an anonymous letter would be to put it into the fire," cried Mr. Carlyle, his lip curling with scorn.

"But who has written it?" danced Justice Hare. "And is Dick at West Lynne?—that's the question!"

"Now, is it likely that he would come to West Lynne?" remonstrated Mr. Carlyle. "Justice, will you pardon me if I venture to give you my candid opinion?"

"The fool at West Lynne: running into the very jaws of death. By Jupiter! if I can drop upon him, I'll retain him in custody, and make out a warrant for his committal! I'll have this everlasting bother over."

"I was about to give you my opinion," quietly put in Mr. Carlyle. "I fear, justice, you bring these annoyances upon yourself."

"Bring them upon myself?" ranted the indignant justice. "I? Did I murder Hallijohn? Did I fly away from the law? Am I in hiding, Beelzebub knows where? Do I take starts, right down into my native parish disguised as a labourer, on purpose to worry my own father? Do I write anonymous letters? Bring them upon myself? Do I? That beats all, Carlyle!"

"You will not hear me out. It is known that you are much exasperated against Richard——"

"And if your son serves you the same when he is grown up, won't you be exasperated, pray?" fired Justice Hare.

"Do hear me. It is known that you are much exasperated, and that any allusion to him excites and annoys you. Now, my opinion is, justice, that some busybody is raising these reports, and writing these letters on purpose to annoy you. It may be some one at West Lynne, very near us, for all we know."

"That's all rubbish," peevishly responded the justice; after a pause. "It's not likely. Who'd do it?"

"It is very likely: but you may be sure they will not give us a clue as to the 'who.' I should put that letter into the fire, and think no more about it. That's the only way to serve them. A pretty laugh they have had in their sleeve, if it is any one near home, at seeing you wade up here through the snow this morning! They would know you were bringing the letter to consult me."

The justice—in spite of his obstinacy, he was somewhat easily persuaded to a different view of things, especially by Mr. Carlyle—let fall his coat-tails, which had been gathered in his arms, as he stood with his back to the fire, and brought both his hands upon the table with force enough to break it. "If I thought that," he thundered; "if I could think it, I'd have the whole parish of West Lynne before me to-day, and commit them for trial."

"It's a pity but that you could," said Mr. Carlyle.

"Well, it may be, or it may not be, that that villain is coming here," he resumed. "I shall call in at the police-station, and tell them to keep a sharp look-out."

"You will do nothing of the sort, justice," exclaimed Mr. Carlyle almost in agitation. "Richard is not likely to make his appearance at West Lynne; but, if he did do so, would you, his own father, turn the flood upon him? Not a man living, but would cry shame upon you. Yes, Mr. Hare, they would. If other people shrink from telling you the truth, I do not. You have boasted that you would deliver Richard up, if he ever threw himself in your path; and your unnatural harshness has been commented upon in no measured terms: it has, I give you my word. But of course no one believed that you would really do it. You might take leave of your friends if you did, for you would find none willing to own you for one afterwards."

"I took an oath I'd do it," said the justice.

"You did not take an oath to go off to the police-station, upon the receipt of any despicable anonymous letter, or any foolish report, and say, 'I have news that my son will be here to-day: look after him.' Nonsense, justice! let the police look out for themselves; but don't you set them on."

The justice growled; whether in assent or dissent did not appear, and Mr. Carlyle resumed.

"Have you shown this letter to Mrs. Hare? or mentioned it to her?"

"Not I. I didn't give myself time for that. I had gone down to the front gate, to see how deep the snow lay in the road, when the postman came up; so I read it as I stood there. I went in for my coat and

waybells to come off to you, and Mrs. Hare wanted to know where I was going in such a hurry; but I did not satisfy her."

"I am truly glad to hear it," said Mr. Carlyle. "Such information; as this, could not fail to have a dangerous effect upon Mrs. Hale. Do not think a moment of it as regards you, Justice; consider how much misery she has already suffered."

"It's partly her own fault. Why can't she drive the ill-doing boy from her mind?"

"If she could do so," said Mr. Carlyle, "she would be acting against human nature. There is one phase of the question which you may possibly not have glanced at, Justice. You speak of delivering your son up to the law: has it ever struck you that you would be delivering up at the same time your wife's life?"

"Stuff?" said the justice.

"You would find it no 'stuff.' So sure as Richard is brought to trial, whether through your means or through any other, so sure will it kill your wife."

Mr. Hare took up the letter, which had lain open on the table, folded it, and put it into its envelope. "I suppose you don't know the writing?" he asked of Mr. Carlyle.

"I never saw it before, tht I remember. Are you returning home?"

"No, I shall go on to Beauchamp's and show him this, and hear what he says. It's not much farther."

"Tell him not to speak of it, then. Beauchamp's safe, for his sympathies are with Richard—oh yes, they are, Justice ask him the question plainly if you like, and he will confess it. I can tell you more sympathy goes with Richard than is acknowledged to you. But I would not show the letter to any one but Beauchamp," added Mr. Carlyle. "neither would I speak of it."

"Who can have written it?" repeated the justice. "It bears, you see, the London post mark."

"It is too wide a speculation to enter upon. And no satisfactory conclusion could come of it."

Justice Hare departed. Mr. Carlyle watched him down the avenue, striding under his umbrella, and then went up to Richard. Miss Carlyle was sitting with him then.

"I thought I should have died," spoke poor Dick. "I declare, Mr. Carlyle, my very blood seemed turned to water, and I thought I should have died with fright. Is he gone away, all safe?"

"He has gone, and all is safe."

"And what did he want? What was it he had heard of me?"

Mr. Carlyle gave a brief explanation, and Richard immediately set down the letter as the work of Thosn. "Will it be possible for me to see my mother this time?" he demanded of Mr. Carlyle.

"I think it would be highly injudicious to let your mother know that you are here, or have been here," was Mr. Carlyle's answer. "She would naturally be inquiring into particulars, and when she came to hear that you were pursued, she would never have another moment's peace. You must forego the pleasure of seeing her this time, Richard."

"And Barbara!"

"She
snow, to see me,
do it."

"She always was a little too
stitches out of her knitting."

"I know she would," observed
"We will try and get her here."

"She can arrange about the money
mother could, you know, sir."

"Yes. For Barbara is in receipt of money or no, I
know she would wish for nothing better than to apply
you. Cornelia, as an excuse for getting her here, I must
Hare that you are ill, and wish Barbara to come for the day and
you company. Shall I do so?"

"Say I am dead, if you like," responded Miss. Corny, who was in one
of her cross moods.

Mr. Carlyle ordered the pony-carriage, and drove forth with John.
He drew in at the Grove. Barbara and Mrs. Hare were seated together,
and looked surprised at the early visit.

"Did you want Mr. Hare, Archibald? He is out. He went while
breakfast was on the table, apparently in a desperate hurry."

"I don't want Mr. Hare. I want Barbara. I have come to
her off."

"To carry off Barbara!" echoed Mrs. Hare.

"Cornelia is not well. She has caught a violent cold, and
Barbara to spend the day with her."

"Oh, Mr. Carlyle, I cannot leave mamma to-day. She
herself, and she would be so dull without me."

"Neither can I spare her, Archibald. It is not a day for
go out in."

How could he manage to say a word to Barbara alone?
deliberately talking the whole time. Mrs. Hare, a servant
sitting-room door.

"The fishmonger," he said, "has been to see him to say that he
time. The trains now, and with this weather, he
time. Mrs. Hare rose from her seat to hold a chair for
her maid; and Mr. Carlyle seized his opportunity.

"Barbara," he whispered, "make no opportunity. What I really want you for is connected with
She looked up at him with a startled glance, and blushed deeply.
her face. Mrs. Hare returned to her seat.
shivered. "I am sure Cornelia cannot expect I
will be there before I go to the office. Not a trace of
Mrs. Hare. The large warm apron will be
shield her bonnet and face. Get your things on,

Do
thing," added

the pony-carriage. Barbara
John sat behind them, and would
arly at East Lynne, Mr. Carlyle gave
use into the breakfast-room.
ice. "prise, Barbara?"
very pale. "Something has hap-

"e you. He is here."

"Under this roof. He slept here last night."

Archibald!"

"Only fancy, Barbara! I opened the window at nine last night,
to look at the weather, and in burst Richard. We could not let him
go out again in the snow; so he slept here, in that room next
Cornelia's."

"Does she know of it?"

"Of course. And Joyce also: we were obliged to tell Joyce.
Imagine Richard's fear! Your father came this morning, calling up
the stairs after me, saying he heard Richard was here. He meant at
Lynne. I thought Richard would have gone out of his mind
for."

"more explanations, and Mr. Carlyle took Barbara into the
Carlyle and her knitting still keeping Richard company.
was to be the general sitting-room for the day; and a hot
Richard's dinner, would be served in Miss Carlyle's chamber
Joyce only admitted to wait upon them.

I must go," said Mr. Carlyle, after chatting a few minutes.
waiting for me, and my poor ponies are in the snow."

"be sure to be home early, Mr. Carlyle!" said Richard.
op here: I might be off a moment later than six or

"died," spoke poor Dick.

